

The Man of Light

IN IRANIAN SUFISM

HENRY CORBIN

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BOOKS

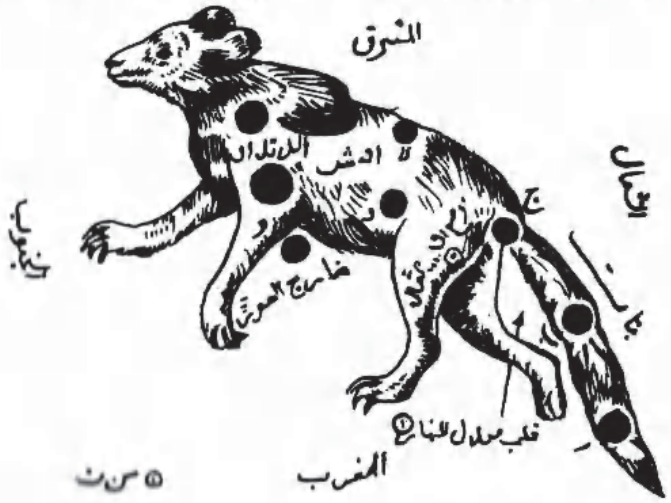


صور الكواكب URSA MINOR لابي الحسين الصوفي

وهذه صورة الدب الاصغر على ما ترى في الكرة



وهذه صورة الدب الاصغر على ما ترى في السماء



Ursa Minor

From *The Book of the 48 Constellations, Treatise on Uranometry*
by Abū'l-Ḥosayn al-Ṣūfī (d. 376/986).
(Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale; Arabic manuscript 5036)

O God, place light in my heart, and light in my soul, light upon my tongue, light in my eyes and light in my ears, place light at my right, light at my left, light behind me and light before me, light above me and light beneath me. Place light in my nerves, and light in my flesh, light in my blood, light in my hair and light in my skin! Give me light, increase my light, make me light!

Zia Inayat Khan

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. . . a lamp burning with the oil of an olive tree which is neither of the East nor of the West, *bursting into flame even though fire touch it not . . . And it is light upon light.*

—Qoran 24:35

I. ORIENTATION

1. The Pole of Orientation[1]

Orientation is a primary phenomenon of our presence in the world. A human presence has the property of spatializing a world around it, and this phenomenon implies a certain relationship of man with the world, *his* world, this relationship being determined by the very mode of his presence in the world. The four cardinal points, east and west, north and south, are not *things* encountered by this presence, but directions which express its *sense*, man's acclimatization to his world, his familiarity with it. To have this sense is to orient oneself in the world. The ideal lines that run from east to west, from north to south form a system of *a priori* spatial evidences without which there would be neither geographic nor anthropological orientation. And indeed, the contrasts between Eastern man and Western man, between Nordic man and Southern man, regulate our ideological and characterological classifications.

The organization, the plan, of this network has depended since time immemorial on a single point: the point of orientation, the heavenly north, the pole star. Is it enough, therefore, to say that spatialization, developed horizontally toward the four cardinal points, is completed by the vertical dimension from beneath to above, from the nadir to the zenith? Or rather

are there not in fact different modes of perception of this same vertical dimension, so different in themselves that they modify the *orientation* of the human presence, not only in space but also in time? "Orientation in time" refers to the different ways in which man experiences his presence on earth, and the continuity of this presence within a kind of history, and the question as to whether this history has a *sense*, and if so, what sense? This in turn raises the question whether the perception of the heavenly pole, of the vertical dimension tending toward the cosmic north, is a uniform phenomenon, physiologically regulated by constant laws, or whether the phenomenon is not in fact regulated and diversified by the very mode of being of the human presence *orienting* itself? Hence therefore the primordial importance of the north and of the concept of the north: it is in accordance with the way in which man inwardly experiences the "vertical" dimension of his own presence that the horizontal dimensions acquire their *sense*.

Now one of the *leitmotive* of Iranian Sufi literature is the "Quest for the Orient," but this is a Quest for an Orient which, as we are forewarned (if we do not already realize), is not—and cannot be—situated on our geographical maps. This Orient is not comprised in any of the seven *climes* (*keshvar*); it is in fact the *eighth* clime. And the direction in which we must seek this "eighth clime" is not on the horizontal but on the vertical. This suprasensory, mystical Orient, the place of the Origin and of the Return, object of the eternal Quest, is at the heavenly pole; it is the Pole, at the extreme north, so far off that it is the threshold of the dimension "beyond." That is why it is only revealed to a definite mode of presence in the world, and can be revealed only through this mode of presence. There are other modes to which it will never be revealed. It is precisely this mode of presence that characterizes the mode of being of the Sufi, but also, through his person, the mode of being of the entire spiritual family to which Sufism—and especially Iranian Sufism—belongs. The *Orient* sought by the mystic, the Orient that cannot be located on our maps, is in the direction of the *north*, beyond the north. Only an ascensional progress can lead toward this cosmic north chosen as a point of orientation.[2]

A primary consequence already foreseen is, to be exact, a *dislocation* of the contrasts regulating the classifications of

exoteric geography and anthropology, which depend on outer appearances. Eastern men and Western men, Northern men and Southern men, will no longer be identified by the characteristics previously attributed to them; it will no longer be possible to locate them in relation to the usual coordinates. We are left wondering at what point the loss comes about in Western man of the individual dimension that is irreducible to classifications based on exoteric geographic direction alone. Then it may happen, just as we have learned to understand alchemy as signifying something quite different from a chapter in the history or prehistory of our sciences, that a geocentric cosmology will also be revealed to us in its true sense, having likewise no connection with the history of our sciences. Considering the perception of the world and the feeling of the universe on which it is based, it may be that geocentrism should be meditated upon and evaluated essentially after the manner of the construction of a *mandala*.

It is this *mandala* upon which we should meditate in order to find again the northern dimension with its symbolic power, capable of opening the threshold of the beyond. This is the North which was "lost" when, by a revolution of the human presence, a revolution of the mode of presence in the world, the Earth was "lost in the heavens." "To lose sight of the North" means no longer to be able to distinguish between heaven and hell, angel and devil, light and shadow, unconsciousness and transconsciousness. A presence lacking a vertical dimension is reduced to seeking the meaning of history by arbitrarily imposing the terms of reference, powerless to grasp forms in the upward direction, powerless to sense the motionless upward impulse of the pointed arch, but expert at superimposing absurd parallelepipeds. And so Western man remains baffled by Islamic spirituality, with its powerful call to recollection of the "pre-eternal covenant": and by the heavenly Assumption (*mi'räj*) of the Prophet; he does not even suspect that his own obsession with the historical, his materialization of "events in Heaven," can be equally baffling to others. In the same way, the Sufi "Heavens of Light" will remain forever inaccessible to the most ambitious "astronautic" investigation, their very existence not even being suspected. "If those who lead you say, 'Lo! the Kingdom is in the sky!,' then the birds of heaven will be

there before you . . . But the Kingdom is within you and also outside of you."[2a]

2. *The Symbols of the North*

And so, if we found ourselves writing the words *Ex Oriente lux* as an epigraph, we would be completely mistaken if we imagined we were saying the same thing as the Spiritual masters discussed in this work are saying, and if looking for the "Light of the Orient" we merely turned toward the geographical east. For, when we speak of the sun rising in the east, this refers to the light of the day as it succeeds the night. Day alternates with night, as two opposites alternate which by their very nature cannot coexist. Light rising in the east and light going down in the west are two premonitions of an existential option between the world of Day with its criteria and the world of Night with its deep and insatiable passions. At best, on the boundary between the two we have a twofold twilight: the *crepusculum vespertinum*, no longer day but not yet night; the *crepusculum matutinum*, no longer night but not yet day. This striking image, as we know, was used by Luther to define the being of man.

In our turn, let us pause to consider what a light can signify which is neither eastern nor western, the northern light: midnight sun, blaze of the aurora borealis. It is no longer a question of day succeeding night, nor night, day. Daylight breaks in the middle of the night and turns into day a night which is still there but which is a Night of light. *Et nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis*. This already suggests the possibility of an innovation in philosophical anthropology: the need to situate and interpret in an entirely new way the opposition between East and West, Light and Darkness, in order finally to discover the full and unforeseen significance of the northern light, and consequently of Nordic man, the man who "is at the north," or who is going toward the north because he has come from the north.

But the north can only attain its full significance by a mode of perception which raises it to the power of a symbol, to being a symbolic direction, that is, to a "dimension beyond" which can be pointed to only by something that "symbolizes with" it. And so we are concerned with primordial Images preceding and

regulating every sensory perception, and not with images constructed *a posteriori* on an empirical basis. For the *sense* of the given phenomenon depends on the primordial Image: the heavenly pole situated on the vertical of human existence, the cosmic north. And even in geographic latitudes where we should hardly think it possible for the phenomenon to occur, its archetypal Image exists. The "midnight sun" appears in many rituals of mystery religions, just as it suddenly bursts forth, in Sohravardī's work, in the midst of an ecstasy of which Hermes is the hero. Later Iranian Sufi masters refer to the Night of light, the dark Noontide, the black Light. And in the Manichean faith it is the flames of the aurora borealis that are visualized in the *Columna gloriae* as composed of all the particles of Light reascending from the *infernum* to the Earth of light, the *Terra lucida*, itself situated, like the paradise of Yima, in the north, that is, in the cosmic north.

Preceding all empirical data, the archetype-Images are the organs of meditation, of the active Imagination; they effect the transmutation of these data by giving them their *meaning*, and precisely in so doing make known the manner of being of a specific human presence and the fundamental *orientation* inherent in it. Taking its bearings by the heavenly pole as the threshold of the world beyond means that this presence then allows a world other than that of geographical, physical, astronomical space to open before it. Here "traveling the straight path" means straying neither to the east nor to the west; it means climbing the peak, that is, being drawn toward the *center*; it is the ascent out of cartographical dimensions, the discovery of the inner world which secretes its own light, which *is* the world of light; it is an innerness of light as opposed to the spatiality of the outer world which, by contrast, will appear as Darkness.

This innerness must in no way be confused with anything that our modern terms subjectivism or nominalism may be supposed to refer to; nor with anything imaginary in the sense of this word that has been contaminated for us by the idea of unreality. The inability to conceive of a concrete suprasensory reality results from giving too much importance to sensory reality; this view, generally speaking, leaves no alternative but to take the suprasensory universe as consisting of abstract con-

cepts. On the contrary, the universe which in Sohravardī's neo-Zoroastrian Platonism is called the *mundus imaginalis* (*'alam al-mithāl*) or the "heavenly Earth of Hūrqalyā" is a concrete spiritual universe. It is most certainly not a world of concepts, paradigms, and universals. Our authors never cease to repeat that the archetype of a species has nothing to do with the universals established in logic, but is the Angel of that species. Rational abstraction, at best, deals only with the "mortal remains" of an Angel; the world of archetype-Images, the autonomous world of visionary Figures and Forms, is on the plane of angelology. To see beings and things "in the northern light" is to see them "in the Earth of Hūrqalyā," that is, to see them in the light of the Angel; it is described as reaching the Emerald Rock, the heavenly pole, coming upon the world of the Angel. And this presupposes that the individual person as such, irrespective of anything collective, virtually has a transcendent dimension at his disposal. Its growth is concomitant with a visionary apperception, giving shape to the suprasensory perceptions and constituting that totality of ways of knowing that can be grouped under the term *hierognosis*.

As a corollary, the terms of reference presupposed by the mystical symbols of the north here suggest something like a psycho-spiritual realm of three dimensions, which the ordinary two-dimensional view cannot account for, since it is restricted to contrasting *consciousness* and *unconsciousness*. To put it more precisely, it has to do with two Darknesses: there is one Darkness which is only Darkness; it can intercept light, conceal it, and hold it captive. When the light escapes from it (according to the Manichean conception or the Ishraq of Sohravardī), this Darkness is left to itself, falls back upon itself; it does not become light. But there is another Darkness, called by our mystics the Night of light, luminous Blackness, black Light.

Already in the mystical Recitals of Avicenna, an explicit distinction, dependent on the vertical orientation, is established between the "Darkness at the approaches to the Pole" (the divine Night of superbeing, of the unknowable, of the origin of origins) and the Darkness which is the extreme occident of Matter and of non-being, where the sun of pure Forms declines and disappears. The Orient in which the pure Forms rise, their *Orient-origin*, is the *pole*, the cosmic north. Here al-

ready the Avicennan recital explicitly shows us a twofold situation and meaning of the "midnight sun": on the one hand, it is the first Intelligence, the archangel Logos, rising as a revelation over the Darkness of the *Deus absconditus*, and which, in terms of the human soul, is the arising of *superconsciousness* on the horizon of consciousness. On the other hand, it is the human soul itself as the light of consciousness rising over the Darkness of the subconscious.[3] We shall see how, in Najmoddīn Kobra's work, the colored photisms (in particular "luminous black" and green light) proclaim and postulate an identical psycho-cosmic structure. That is why *orientation* requires here a threefold arrangement of planes: the day of *consciousness* is on a plane intermediate between the luminous Night of *superconsciousness* and the dark Night of *unconsciousness*. The divine Darkness, the Cloud of unknowing, the "Darkness at the approaches to the Pole," the "Night of symbols" through which the soul makes its way, is definitely not the Darkness in which the particles of light are held captive. The latter is the extreme occident, and is Hell, the demonic realm. Orientation by the Pole, the cosmic north, determines what is below and what is above; to confuse one with the other would merely indicate *disorientation* (cf. *infra* V, 1).

This orientation might well be what would enable us to validate what Michel Guiomar so admirably foresaw. Our classical oppositions expressed in the refusal of the hostile dawn or, on the contrary, in the distress of twilight, of the "refused evening," might well turn out to be nothing other than pairs become unrecognizable, that is to say the divergence, in Mediterranean and northern geographical areas, from one and the same great original myth. This would imply an explosion of this myth into two kinds of anguish, two refusals, two correlative kinds of powerlessness in the case of the man who has lost his "polar dimension," that is to say of man no longer oriented toward the heavenly pole and so faced with the dilemma of Day succeeding Night, or of Night succeeding Day.

To speak of the polar dimension as the transcendent dimension of the earthly individuality is to point out that it includes a counterpart, a heavenly "partner", and that its total structure is that of a bi-unity, a *unus-ambo*. This *unus-ambo* can be taken as an alternation of the first and second person, as

tion such as we have just been brought to recognize, is specifically what opens up this other dimension; it does not relate the essential individuality either to collective mediation or to any socialized or socializable religious form. All depends upon whether our *ability to comprehend*, our *hermeneutics*, has or has not sufficient dimensions at its disposal. Accordingly, a spirituality as original as that of Najm Kobra, attentive to the perception of signs of this essential individuation in suprasensory colored photisms, may either orient our search toward a new horizon or possibly cripple it because of a misinterpretation resulting in disorientation.

Let us try to construct the diagram suggested to us from the outset by the threefold structure of the soul (*supra* IV, 3). On the lower plane: *nafs ammara*, the lower ego, the imperative *psyche*, apparent in the disk of shadow, the Black figure, the black cloud turning to dark blue. On the upper plane: *nafs motma'yanna*, the pacified soul, the green color, emerald splendor and orbs of light. Between the two: the soul-consciousness (*nafs eawwāma*) perceived in vision as a great red sun; this is the intellect (*'aql*), consciousness proper. In terms of the *scales*: the "witness in Heaven" becomes manifest to the extent that the soul-consciousness, placed in the center, empties the "pan" of the scales containing the lower soul, and gives greater weight to the "pan" of the pacified soul which is the *heart*, that is to say, the subtle organ so named by the Sufis. And this is why it was possible, from that point on, to give an unambiguous answer to a first question: to whom did the shadow, the black color visualized at the beginning, belong? In other words, could the "heavenly witness" ever have *been* darkness? No, this darkness was the darkness of your own nature, whose opacity was opposed to the transparency that conditions the reciprocal presence of the man of light to the guide of light and ultimately the penetration of the Image of the Guide into you to the point where it may be possible to say "you are he" (1 × 1). And so it was your own shadow, your Iblīs or *nafs ammara* which was projecting and interposing a veil that the flame of the *dhikr* finally set on fire and consumed; this was the only thing that was making the *shaykh al-ghayb*, your partner and heavenly counterpart, invisible.

But the transmutation that is effected by no means signifies

that the old Iblīs, your "Iblīs converted to Islam" has become your *shaykh al-ghayb*, your "witness in Heaven." Conversion of your Iblīs (your *nafs ammāra*) to Islam is the *condition on which* the *shaykh al-ghayb* can become visible; which is not at all to say that Iblīs becomes the "witness in Heaven." Such a notion is untenable because of the fundamental orientation, the polar orientation analyzed here at the beginning: either the soul-consciousness is not freed from its shadow, the *nafs ammara,* but looks at it and through it, thus seeing nothing but shadow, *its* shadow; or else the shadow has subsided and the soul has risen to the degree of *nafs motma'yanna* and sees its own dimension of light.

If this is stressed to avoid confusion, it is because a question will inevitably arise. It would be very tempting indeed to interpret the triadic diagram of the soul recalled above in terms of consciousness and the unconscious and leave it at that. However, can the phenomena of shadow and light, the inner process of which has been so minutely analyzed by Najm Kobrā and the Sufis of his school, really be translated simply by speaking of consciousness as the region of light and the unconscious as the region of shadow? The soul-consciousness (*nafs lawwāma*) is placed between the two: between the lower soul and the higher soul, to which and by which the "witness in Heaven," the suprasensory Guide, is made manifest. How could one possibly say that the "two souls" between which the soul-consciousness is placed both belonged equally to the same region of *shadow*? The first is the shadow that has to be overcome in order for the bi-unitary structure to be restored. Is it not then this two-dimensionality of the soul (a syzygy of lights) which itself postulates the three-dimensionality of psycho-spiritual spatiality? In other words: does not the *trilogy* of the soul (*supra* IV, 3) force us to admit at least orientation, distinct levels within the unconscious, in order to determine its structure? But how can one introduce positive differentiations into what is negative and negativity? A more serious decision has to be made, namely, to accept all that follows from our diagram, if we wish to avoid the mistake, already pointed out, of confusing complementary elements with contradictory elements, which would lead to interpreting the Fravarti, or the "witness in Heaven," and Iblīs-Ahriman as complementary manifestations of the same Shadow.

Foreseeing these difficulties, we have avoided here two things in particular. In the first place we have avoided relating the idea of the "witness in Heaven" to what is connoted by the German term *Doppelgänger*, precisely because of the ambiguity, the shadow, attached to this term. In fact what we are speaking of is a counterpart, a celestial, transcendent counterpart, rather than a "double"; the idea of this heavenly partner is antithetic to the Double whose role is suggested in a number of fantastic tales, and there could be no question of bringing these antitheses together to form one Whole. And indeed psychological analysis shows this Double to be the manifestation of the personal unconscious, hence belonging to the functions of the lower psyche, that is, the *nafs ammāra*, the dark envelope, the shadow, exactly what the *dhikr* has to destroy by fire so that the Guide of light may become visible. What prevents the reunion of twin lights cannot be one of its constitutive elements.

In the second place, in the few phenomenological indications outlined here and there, we have avoided any suggestion of a "collective unconscious." One notices in fact a certain tendency to accentuate in this expression the adjective "collective," to the point of giving it the substantiality and virtues of an hypostasis: in so doing, it is simply forgotten that the purpose of psychoanalysis, as therapy for the soul, tends essentially to foster what it calls the process of individuation. For the same reason it would be absurd to explain the kind of individual initiation proper to Sufism by relating it to some collective norm, whereas its whole purpose is to free the inner man from such authority. The predisposition to something like Sufism can exist in a multitude of individuals, but it is not for that reason a collective disposition. The obsessions of the present day will end by obscuring every spiritual or cultural phenomenon that does not fit their case.

As for the construction of the diagram, urgently required, as we foresaw a little earlier, so that our hermeneutics might have the requisite dimensions, we should now amplify it as follows: an anthropogony in which antithetic forces (murderer and victim, for example) objectively represent one divine primordial reality is one thing; an anthropogony situating man between two worlds is quite a different thing. Man according to Ismaelian gnosis is an intermediary—potential angel or potential demon; his complete eschatological reality is not the sum of

these two antithetical virtualities. Man in Ibn 'Arabī's anthropogony is likewise intermediate: situated between being and non-being, between Light and Darkness, at the same time responsible and respondent to both sides; he is responsible for the Darkness to the extent that he intercepts the Light, but he is responsible for the Light to the extent that he prevents the Darkness from invading and governing it.[104]

In Najm Kobrā, the soul-consciousness is also placed between the two. This being so, we need a diagram superimposing the planes; it is impossible to suppose that there could be one single invisible area, inevitably and unilaterally situated *below* the visible area, that is, the area of unconsciousness. A number of manifestations surpassing and going beyond the bounds of the conscious activity of the soul have to be placed not below but *above consciousness*. There is a *subconsciousness* or *infraconsciousness*, corresponding to the level of the *nafs ammara*; and there is a *superconsciousness* or *supraconsciousness*. corresponding to the level of the *nafs motma'yanna*. In the physical order, the invisibility of an object may be due to a lack of light; it may also be due to an excess of light, to the dazzling effect of being too close to it. In the "suprasensory" order, that of the "suprasensory senses" or physiology of the man of light, the same applies. On the one hand invisibility (absence of the *shāhid*), which is the shadow, the Ahrimanian darkness, the negation or captivity of the light; opposed to this the invisibility that the disciples of Najm Kobrā call the "black light," the preorigin of all that is visible, that is to say, of all light (*infra*, V). For this very reason, the "black light" is the antithesis of the Ahrimanian darkness. In both cases there is something that is beyond the limits of consciousness. But in the first case the invisibility, the absence of light, is a fact pertaining to *subconsciousness*; in the second case, invisibility due to an excess of brilliance, to being too close to the light, is a fact pertaining to *superconsciousness* or *transconsciousness*. And the facts of superconsciousness are individual facts; individually, each soul has to overcome, as well as its own shadow, the collective shadow.

As an "exemplary fact" among the facts of superconsciousness, it is necessary to recall—though the word is generally misused—the fact referred to by the idea of *vocation* with all its mysterious, imperative, irrational and inexorable connotations.

The idea of vocation serves perhaps better than any other for recapitulating all that is suggested by the idea of the Angel, conveyed to us in the theme of *Daenā* as glory (δόξα) and destiny (τύχη), in the theme of the Perfect Nature of the Sohravardian Hermes, and finally in the theme of the "Witness in Heaven," of the "Scales of the suprasensory world"[105] by Najm Kobrā. In such a recapitulation, the essential, undeniable idea of individuality is seen in fact as inseparable from angelology because it provides a basis for the idea of the Angel just as the idea of the Angel is its own foundation.

On this basis, the idea of individuality stands firm in face of the attempts to justify "collectivization" and nominalist concepts. It saves us from the illusion of believing that it is enough to escape from the individual sphere and, by reaching the "social" sphere, simultaneously to reach the divine, for it is the reverse of the mystic's view of the gradations of being as he scales the mountain of *Qāf* to the Emerald Rock at its summit, and emerges step by step above and beyond the natural realms—the vegetable world, the animal world and the human species. Step by step, a species is revealed which does not yet include individuals; then the individual coexisting with the species that dominates him; then the individual coexisting with the species he dominates. Finally, from ascent to ascent, the return of the man of light to his original pleroma postulates the idea of a non-specific individual, of archetypal individuality whose soaring flight and power, by assuming all the virtualities of a species, itself becomes a unique example. The idea of an individual who is himself his species is the idea of the Angel.[106] Leibnitz transposed it into the monadic concept of the soul and this is what truly makes it possible to understand the idea of vocation as relationship with the archetype. Here exactly this specificity of an individuality being born at the end of a personal mystical initiation is made manifest as a state of "dualitude," a *unus-ambo* structure. This bi-unity is not a union of two contradictory elements, Ohrmazdean light and Ahrimanian darkness, but a union of Ohrmazd and his own Fravarti, of twins of light, of the "pacified soul" and its "witness in Heaven," of Hermes and his Perfect Nature, of *Phōs* and his guide of light, consciousness and *superconsciousness*. "And it is light upon light."

V. THE BLACK LIGHT

1. Light Without Matter

Essentially, what has just been referred to as "superconsciousness" (*sirr*, *khafī*, in Sufi terminology) cannot be a collective phenomenon. It is always something that opens up at the end of a struggle in which the protagonist is the spiritual individuality. One does not pass collectively from the sensory to the suprasensory, for this passage is the birth and expansion of the person of light. Without doubt a mystical fraternity will result from it, but does not exist before it (Hermes is alone as he enters the subterranean chamber following the instructions of his Perfect Nature, *supra* II, 1). As we have seen, this gradual opening is marked by certain "theophanic lights" corresponding to each stage. The correspondence of these lights, the determination of their degree of presence by and for their "witness" is the very thing that thematizes the motif of the *shahid*.[107] The "super-individuality" of the mystic, that is to say, the transcendent dimension of the person, is conditioned by this syzygic inseparability. Once the threshold has been crossed, the perspective opens on the peripatetics of a secret history, the stages of the spiritual journey, the perils and triumphs of the person of light, the occultations and re-appearances of his *shāhid*. To follow these to the end in detail would require a thorough study of the whole of Iranian Sufism, whereas we

must limit ourselves here to pointing out some further essential features borrowed from three or four of the great masters. The dimension of superconsciousness is symbolically heralded by the "black light"; according to Najm Rāzī and Mohammed Lahījī, this constitutes the highest spiritual stage; according to Semnānī, it marks the most perilous initiatic step, the stage immediately preceding the ultimate theophany, which is heralded by the green light. In any case there are obstacles of the highest significance between the *visio smaragdina* and the "black Light," due to their contiguity.

The idea of "black light" (Persian *nūr-e siyāh*) is above all what obliges us to distinguish between two dimensions which could not be accounted for by a one-dimensional or undifferentiatable unconscious. To the extent that the mystical language comes to "symbolize with" physical experience, it seems that the latter perfectly illustrates the idea of a polarity not so much between consciousness and the unconscious as between a superconsciousness and a subconsciousness. There is one darkness which is matter, and there is another darkness which is an absence of matter. Physicists distinguish between the *blackness* of matter and the *blackness* of the stratosphere.[108] On the one hand there is the *black body*, a body that absorbs all light without distinction of color; this is what is "seen" in a dark furnace. When heated it passes from black to red, then to white, then to white-red. All this light is light absorbed by matter and re-emitted by it. This is also so in the case of the "particle of light" (the man of light, φώς-φώς) absorbed in the dark well (*nafs ammara*, *supra* III, 3), which according to Najm Kobra and Sohravardī, is compelled by the fire of the *dhikr* to liberate the particle, to "re-emit" it. This then is the black figure, the well or dark furnace; it is the lower darkness, the infraconscious or subconscious. But there is another light, a light-without-matter, which becomes visible when released from this already made matter that had absorbed it. The darkness above is the blackness of the stratosphere, of stellar space, of the black Sky. In mystical terms, it corresponds to the light of the divine Self in-itself (*nūr-e dhāt*), the black light of the *Deus absconditus*, the hidden Treasure that aspires to reveal itself, "to create perception in order to reveal to itself the object of its perception," and which thus can only manifest itself by veiling itself in the object

state. This divine darkness does not refer therefore to the lower darkness, that of the black body, the infraconsciousness (*nafs ammāra*), but to the black Heavens, the black Light in which the ipseity of the *Deus absconditus* is pre-sensed by the superconsciousness.

We therefore need a metaphysics of Light whose paths will be mapped by the mystic's *spiritual experience* of colors, especially, in the present case, the experience of the Iranian Sufis. Their visionary apperception of colored lights postulates an idea of *pure color* consisting of an *act of light* which actualizes its own matter, that is, which actualizes in differentiated stages the potentiality of the "hidden Treasure" aspiring to reveal itself. More certain and more direct than any other is the reference in an earlier chapter that takes us back to the distinction established in one of the great mystical Recitals of Avicenna between the "Darkness at the approaches to the *pole*" and the Darkness reigning at the "Far West" of matter. The latter is the darkness whose behavior in regard to light is described by physics; these are the forces of darkness that retain the light, obstruct its passage, the forces of the black object which absorbs light and which in the "oriental theosophy" of Sohravardī is called by the characteristic ancient Iranian term of *barzakh* (screen, barrier). On the other hand, the Darkness at the "approaches to the *pole*" is the region of the "black Light," which exists before all the matter that it will itself actualize in order to be received in it and, in it, to become visible light. The antithesis is established between the black light of the pole and the darkness of the material black body, and not simply between light and the darkness of matter. Between the material black body (typified for example by the *nafs ammāra*) from which the light seeks to escape and the pre-material black light (that of the divine Ipseity) the whole universe of lights extends upwards and in their actuality as lights become colors in an autonomous state of life and substantiality.

Since their entire effort tends to free them from a matter which would be foreign to their action and in which they are sometimes captive (see *infra* VI, 1, the meaning of Manichean painting and its influence on Persian miniatures), they do not even need to settle on the surface of an object which could be their prison in order *to be* colors. These lights, made into colors

in the very act of becoming light, have to be represented as creating for themselves, out of their own life and nature, their form and their space (that *spissitudo spiritualis*, to borrow again an expression of Henry More's, which is the place of the suprasensory perceptions described by Najm Kobrā and his disciples). These pure lights (forming, according to Sohravardī, a twofold order, longitudinal and latitudinal, "Mothers" and archetypes) are, in the *act of light* which constitutes them, constitutive of their own theophanic form (*mazhar*). The "acts of light" (photisms, *ishrāqāt*) actualize their own receptacles which make the light visible. "Light without matter" means here the light whose act actualizes its own matter (again according to Sohravardī, material bodies are never the sufficient reasons for the properties which they manifest). In relation to the matter of the black body, invested with the forces of obscurity, Ahrimanian darkness, it is no doubt equivalent to an immaterialization. More exactly it is matter in the *subtle* "etheric" *state* (*latīf*), the act of the light, and not antagonistic to light; it is the incandescence of the *mundus imaginalis* (*'ālam al-mithāl*), the world of autonomous figures and forms, the heavenly Earth of Hurqalya "which secretes its own light." To see things in Hūrqalyā, as certain Sufi shaykhs say, is to see them in that state which can only be perceived by the "suprasensory senses" (*supra* IV, 7). This perception is not a passively received impression of a material object, but activity of the subject, that is, conditioned by the physiology of the man of light. In this context the Goethean doctrine of "physiological colors" (*infra* VI, 3) finds its place spontaneously.

We shall learn further (*infra* V, 3) that the "black light" is that of the divine Ipseity as the light of revelation, which *makes one see*. Precisely what *makes one see*, that is to say, light as absolute *subject*, can in nowise become a visible *object*. It is in this sense that the Light of lights (*nur al-anwār*), that by which all visible lights are made visible, is both light and darkness, that is, visible because it *brings about vision*, but in itself invisible. Henceforth also when speaking of color as a mixture of light and darkness, we should not understand it as a mixture with the Ahrimanian shadow, even if it were only the shadow of the black object. The seven colors emerge on the level of the most transparent of bodies. This mixture is to be understood as the

relation of the act of light with the infinite potentiality which aspires to reveal itself ("I was a hidden treasure, I wanted to be known"), that is, as the epiphanic act in the night of the *Absconditum*. But this divine night is the antithesis of the Ahrimanian darkness; it is the source of the epiphanies of the light which the Ahrîmanian darkness later seeks to engulf. The world of colors in the pure state, that is, the orbs of light, is the totality of the *acts* of this Light which makes them lights and cannot itself be manifested except by these acts, without ever being itself visible. And all these receptacles, these theophanic forms which it creates in these very acts which make it manifest are always in correlation with the state of the mystic; i.e., with the activity of the "particle of light" in man which seeks to rediscover its like.[108a] Perhaps we can glimpse the correlation which requires us on the one hand to distinguish between the *superconscious* and the *subconscious* and on the other hand between the *black light* and the blackness of the *black object*. And this completes the summary of *orientation* which we have sought to establish in the present essay—admittedly in very imperfect terms.

2. *The Doctrine of Photisms according to Najm Rāzī (1256)*

Najm Rāzī,[109] direct disciple of Najm Kobrā, is the author of a mystical treatise in Persian still in current use today in Iranian Sufism, wherein the chapters particularly related to our subject deal with visionary apperceptions (*moshāhadāt*) and the unveilings of the suprasensory (*mokāshafāt*).[110] Their *leitmotiv* makes the distinction between the theophanies or apparitions of divine lights which are those of the "Lights of Majesty" and the theophanies which are those of the "Lights of Beauty." Majesty (i.e. rigor, inaccessible sublimity) and Beauty (fascination, attraction, graciousness): these are the two great categories of attributes which refer respectively to the divine Being as *Deus absconditus* and as *Deus revelatus*, Beauty being the supreme theophany, divine self-revelation.[111] In fact they are inseparable and there is a constant interplay between the inaccessible Majesty of Beauty and the fascinating Beauty of inaccessible Majesty. The interplay is even such that Najm Kobrā, when comparing their relation to that of the masculine and feminine

principles, perceives a transference corresponding to a mutual exchange of the masculine and feminine attributes (§4). And to suggest that their twofoldness is necessary for the spiritual individuality to be born, he quotes this saying of the Sufi Abū-Bakr Wasitī: "The attribute of Majesty and the attribute of Beauty intermingle; from their union the Spirit is born. The son is an allusion to partial reality; the father and mother an allusion to total reality." (§65). According to Najm Rāzī, photisms, pure lights and colored lights, refer to the attributes of Beauty; the "black light" refers to the attributes of Majesty. He outlines the "physiology of the man of light" concurrently with the theory of the "unveilings of the suprasensory world."

First of all, as a general rule, the capacity to perceive suprasensory lights is proportionate to the degree of polishing, chiefly the work of the *dhikr*, which brings the *heart* to the state of perfect mirror. In the beginning these lights are manifested as ephemeral flashes. The more perfect the transparency (the "specularity") of the mirror, the more they grow, the longer they last, the more diverse they become, until they manifest the form of heavenly entities. As a general rule also, the source where these Lights take shape is the spiritual entity of the mystic, his *ruhanīyat*, the very same, as we have seen (*supra* II, 1), in Sohravardī and the Hermetists under the name of Perfect Nature, the philosopher's "Angel." But besides this we have to take into consideration that every spiritual state, every function, every feeling, every act, has its spiritual entity, its "Angel" which manifests itself in the light proper to it. Prophecy (*nobowwat*), Initiation (*walāyat*), the spirits of the Initiates (*Awliyā*), the great shaykhs of Sufism, the Qorān, the profession of Islam, the fidelity of faith (*īmān*),[112] even every form of *dhikr*, every form of divine office and worship, each one of these realities is expressed in a light proper to it.

In the description given by our author of the suprasensory phenomena of pure light, what we note in short is the following: brief flashes and flames most often originate from the liturgical acts (prayer, ritual ablution, etc.). A longer and brighter light is that from the Qorān or from the *dhikr*. There may be visualization of the well-known verse from the chapter Light (24:35): "The image of His light is that of a Niche wherein there is a lamp, the lamp is in a case of glass . . . " Here the

"Niche of lights" manifests a light of the prophecy or else of the initiatic quality of the shaykh. Tapers, lamps and live embers manifest the different forms of *dhikr* or else are an effect of the light of gnosis. All the forms of stars which are shown in the Skies of the heart (*āsmān-e del*) are, as in Najm Kobrā, lights manifesting the Angel; i.e., the esoteric aspect of the astronomical Sky that is its homologue (*batin-e falak*). According to the heart's degree of purity, the star may be seen without its Sky or else with its Sky; in the latter case, the Sky is the "subtle astral mass" of the heart, whereas the star is the light of the Spirit. The Constellated figures manifest the *Animae coelestes*. Sun and moon may appear in various positions, each of which has its meaning. The full moon in the Sky of the heart manifests the effects of the initiation corresponding to the degree of lunar initiation (*walāyat-e qamarīya*); the sun manifests the effects of the solar or total initiation (*w. kollīya*). Several suns together are a manifestation of the perfect Initiates (*Awliyā-e kollī*). Sun and moon contemplated together are the joint manifestation of the form of the shaykh and the form of the absolute initiator.[113] Sun, moon and stars may appear as though immersed either in the sea or in running water or on the contrary in motionless water, sometimes in a well. All the mystics recognize there the lights of their "spiritual entity." These immersions in a transparent element proclaim the extreme purity of the heart, the state of the "pacified soul," which, at the boundary, will allow the rays of the divine Lights to pierce through all the veils. This is the meaning of the verse in the *sūra* of the Star: "The heart does not belie what it has seen (53:11)," the mystical sense which sanctions the Prophet's visions ("My heart has seen my Lord in the most beautiful of forms") and the theophanies vouchsafed to Abraham and Moses.

Najm Razī knows it: it may be asked whether all these theophanies take *place* in the inner, esoteric world or rather in the outer, exoteric world? His answer is that anyone who asks this kind of question remains far from the real situation where the two worlds meet and coincide. In one case it may be that the suprasensory perception is awakened and stimulated by a sensory perception; between the sensory (*hissī*) and the suprasensory (*ghaybī*), the exoteric (*zāhir*) and the esoteric (*bātin*), there is synchronism and symbolism; these are even the foundation

and criterion of visionary apperception. In another instance, a direct perception of the suprasensory by the organ of the heart may come about without a sensory organ or physical support (see *supra* IV, 1, *aura* and auric perception). In either case this organ of the heart (with the spiritual energy of the *Imaginatrix*, effects a transmutation of the sensory so that it is perceived "in Hurqalya," on the plane of the *mundus imaginalis*, the *imaginal* world wherein "what is corporeal becomes spirit and what is spiritual assumes a body" ("our method is that of alchemy,"said Najm Kobrā).[114] This is the meaning derived by spiritual hermeneutics from the verse on the Light: "God is the light of the Heavens and of the Earth" (24:35), for, in reality and in the true sense, what makes *manifest* (that is, light) and that which *is manifested* (*mazhar*, the theophanic form), what sees and what is seen are the divine Being himself. "When the meaning of Abraham's exclamation: *This is my Lord* has been mystically understood, then sensory and suprasensory, exoteric and esoteric, apparent and hidden, will be one and the same thing."

Semnānī perceives in another verse of the Qorān (41:53) the very principle of the inward movement whereby every outer datum becomes an event pertaining to the soul, bringing historical, physical time (*zaman āfāqī*) back to inner, psychic time (*zaman anfosī*). This is the final end toward which all mystic ways converge; it is the spiritual abode where the gaze of the one who contemplates the beauty of the Witness of contemplation (*shāhid*) in the mirror of the inner eye, the eye of the heart, is none other than the gaze of the Witness: "I am the mirror of thy face; through thine own eyes I look upon thy countenance." The Contemplated is the Contemplator and vice versa;[115] we have already attempted here to approach the secret of this mystical reciprocity, a paradox which cannot be better expressed than in terms of light. Najm Razī pursues the attempt to the limit:

> If the light rises in the Sky of the heart taking the form of one or of several light-giving moons, the two eyes are closed to this world and to the other. If this light rises and, in the utterly pure inner man attains the brightness of the sun or of many suns, the mystic is no longer aware of this world nor of the other, he sees only his own Lord under the veil of the Spirit; then his heart is nothing but light, his subtle body is light, his material covering is

> light, his hearing, his sight, his hand, his exterior, his interior are nothing but light, his mouth and his tongue also.

The photisms of pure light thus described correspond to the state of the heart which is that of the "pacified soul." The colored photisms which Najm Razī proceeds to describe rise step by step from the moment when the spiritual individuality is triumphantly freed from the lower ego (*ammaragī*) and, on reaching the degree of consciousness (*lawwāmagī*), makes its way to the degree of the pacified soul, the threshold of the beyond (*supra* IV, 3). Then the mystic enters the first valley, following an itinerary the successive stages of which are marked by the visualization of colored lights, leading him to the seventh valley, the valley of "black light." But here we should note certain features through which the originality of each of the Iranian Sufi masters becomes apparent (paying no heed to the immutable rigidity of a certain "tradition" put together in our day in the West). Whereas Semnanī connects the colored lights to the *seven* centers or organs of subtle physiology (*latīfa*), Najm Razī relates them simply to spiritual states. He outlines, however, in connection with the "unveilings of the suprasensory," a "physiology" of the subtle organs, of which in his theory there are only *five*. What is more, the colored lights are differently graded and in a quite different order in the respective works of these two masters.

According to the Najm Rāzī the colors visualized by the suprasensory senses are graded in the following order: at the first stage, the light visualized is *white light*; it is the sign of *Islām*. At the second stage, *yellow light*; this is the sign of the fidelity of faith (*īmān*). At the third stage, the light is *dark blue* (*kabūd*); it is the sign of benevolence (*ihsān*). At the fourth stage, the light is *green*; this is the sign of tranquility of the soul (the pacified soul, *motma'yanna*). Perception of the green light thus agrees as to its meaning, if not as to its place in the order of succession, with the perception of the green light in Najm Kobrā's treatise (regarding Semnanī's, see *infra* VI, 1). At the fifth stage, *azure blue light*; this is the sign of firm assurance (*īqān*). At the sixth stage, *red light*; the sign of mystical gnosis, "theosophical" knowledge (in Najm Kobrā, it is the color of the *Nous*, or active Intelligence). At the seventh stage, *black light* (*nūr-e siyāh*); the sign of passionate, ecstatic love.

The first six steps thus correspond to the lights which Najm Razī describes as lights of the attribute of Beauty, theophanic lights which *illuminate*. The "black light" is that of the attribute of Majesty which sets the mystic's being on fire; it is not contemplated; it attacks, invades, annihilates, then annihilates annihilation. It shatters the "supreme theurgy" (*talasm-e a'zam*), that is, the apparatus of the human organism; this term incidentally occurs also in Sohravardī's vocabulary. Their conjunction is however essential (see Wāsitī's text cited above); thus it is inaccessible Majesty which is revealed in alluring Beauty and Beauty which *is* revealed Majesty. But this revelation presupposes a form, a receptable (*mazhar*) to receive it. Najm Razī affirms that there is light and darkness wherever you look, and that this is why the Qoran (in reference to light and darkness) speaks not of a creation or created state (*khalqīyat*), but of a primordial establishment (*ja'līyat*, conditioning the very coming into existence of being). Light and darkness are not things alongside other things, but are categories of things. This preliminary orientation will then save us from confusing the divine Night, the abscondity of the Essence which causes light to be revealed, and the darkness here below, the demonic darkness which holds the light captive and does not allow it to escape. This darkness is not what makes the light manifest; it releases it when forced to do so. But if all light so released is visible as light, if therefore the light calls for a "matter," a receptacle to condition this visibility, then the matter in question is not that of the lower darkness. Here the importance is felt (as we have been reminded many times) of the world of subtle matter, *mundus imaginalis* (*'ālam al-mithāl*), in the cosmology professed by all our Spiritual seekers. "Subtle matter" is the esoteric Heavens of the heart, its "astral mass" and so forth. The suprasensory phenomena of colored lights are produced by this "matter" because it is the act itself of light, not the antagonist of light. Divine Night (*Deus absconditus*), as the source and origin of all light (*Deus revelatus*), is not a compound of the demonic and the divine. But this divine light, once revealed, may well fall into captivity in Ahrimanian darkness. This drama is admirably described by the Manichean cosmogony, as an ever-present drama with inexhaustible variants, up to and including confusion of the social with the divine.

§2. *The Doctrine of Photisms according to Najm Rāzī*

As to the theory of the *subtle organs* according to Najm Razi, while differing from Semnanī's theory, it nevertheless opens the way to the latter. The theory proceeds essentially from the tradition (*hadīth*) which states: "God has 70,000 veils of light and of darkness; if he removed them the brilliance of his Face would burn up all that met his look." These veils are the totality of all the sensory and suprasensory universes (*molk* and *malakūt*, *shahādat* and *ghaybat*). The figure which determines the number *qualitatively*, following the above tradition, is 70,000. But there are variants; some traditions mention 18,000 worlds, others 360,000 worlds.[116] Now, all these worlds are existent in the inner world of man, in his subtle or esoteric (*nahan* = *batīn*) being, which includes as many "eyes" as there are worlds; through these "eyes" man perceives respectively each of these worlds, by the living experience of the spiritual state in which each of these worlds becomes manifest in him. Thus he possesses 70,000 "eyes", among which are the five outer senses attached to the bodily realities of sensory matter, the five inner senses, the five energies of organic physiology; but these, one suspects already, are only a small part of the energies of the whole man to whom "suprasensory senses" are available. And so the term *mokāshafāt*, "unveilings," is never used by Sufis (as Najm Razī points out) in reference to objects of a perception deriving from the three categories of faculties just enumerated, but only in reference to suprasensory realities. It thus implies *eo ipso* the idea of unveilings of suprasensory things that come about in the case of the *sāhib-e kashf*, a term which again cannot be better translated than by the word "clairvoyant."

When the "clairvoyant" commits himself to the *tarīqat* or mystical journey, following the rules of spiritual warfare under the direction of the master of initiation (*wāli*) and the shaykh, he passes in succession through all these veils; at each station (*maqām*) an inner eye opens in him correspondingly, and he perceives all the modes of being or spiritual states relating to that station. This perception is effected by the suprasensory faculties or organs of the subtle physiology of the "clairvoyant," which in each generation are imparted to a small group of humans. While Semnānī enumerates seven subtle organs or *latīfa*, Najm Rāzī takes them as five only: the intellect, the heart, the spirit, the superconsciousness (*sirr*), and the *arcanum* or trans-

consciousness (*khafī*). Each of these suprasensory faculties perceives its own world; this is why we hear of an unveiling to the intellect (*kashf-e 'aqlī*; the majority of philosophers have not gone beyond that); an unveiling to the heart (*mokashafat-e del*, visions of the various colored lights); unveilings to the spirit (*m. ruhī*, assumptions to heaven, visions of angels, perception of past and future in their permanent state); finally, unveiling to the superconsciousness and to the *arcanum*. There "the time and space of the beyond" are revealed; what was seen from this side is seen from the other side. And all these organs are intermediate in regard to the others, each transmitting to the next what has been granted and unveiled to itself, and the next receives this in the form proper to itself; the further the mystic progresses on the seven steps of the heart by conforming his being to the *moribus divinis* (*takhalloq bi-akhlāq Allah*), the more these unveilings multiply for him.

3. Black Light in the "Rose Garden of Mystery" (1317)

The long Persian poem bearing the title of Golshan-e Rāz (the Rose Garden of Mystery), comprising about 1500 couplets, is the work of Mahmud Shabestarī.[117] This work has been read closely and continuously in Iran until now, but its extreme conciseness (in it the author answers many questions gathered by one of his friends concerning the high doctrines of Sufism) has motivated the writing of any number of commentaries. Among these the most complete and also the most frequently studied in Iran until today is that of Shamsoddin Lahījī; its scope and content make it a veritable compendium of Sufism.[118]

A feature reported in the biography of Lahījī demonstrates to what point the doctrine of colored photisms, showing the mystic his degree of progress on the spiritual way, is reflected in the detail of his daily life; it suggests to him in fact that he can wear garments whose colors correspond to those of the lights successively characterizing his spiritual state; the experience is thus translated practically into the symbols of a personal liturgy, coinciding with the very current of life. Qāzī Nūrollah Shoshtarī[119] relates that during the time when Shāh Esmā'īl (Ismael)[120] established his power in the province of Fārs (Per-

sis) and Shīraz, the sovereign wished to visit the shaykh. When he met him, he asked: "Why have you chosen always to wear black clothing?" "In mourning for the Imām Hosayn," answered the shaykh. But the king remarked, "It has been established that only ten days each year should be devoted to mourning the holy Imam." "No," replied the shaykh, "that is a human error. In reality the mourning for the holy Imam is a permanent mourning; it will not end until the dawn of the Resurrection."

Obviously one can hear in this answer testimony to the fervor of a Shī'ite, at the heart of whose meditations remains the drama of Karbala, just as the drama of Christ's Passion is at the heart of Christian piety. But another intention can also be seen in the wearing of this black clothing, an intention corresponding precisely to the practice by certain groups in Sufism of wearing clothing of the same color as that of the light contemplated in the mystic station they had attained. In this way a "chromatic harmony" is established between the esoteric and the exoteric, the hidden and the apparent. Thus in the first stages, blue (*kabūd*) clothing was worn.[121] At the highest stage black clothing would have corresponded to the "black light." Is this then indeed the meaning which we find in this personal practice of Lāhījī, which so astonished Shāh Esmā'īl? A poem composed by one of his own disciples in praise of the shaykh, seems indeed to confirm this.[122]

In any case, the pages where Lāhījī unfolds the theme of the "black light" in commenting on Mahmūd Shabestarī's poem are of capital importance when it comes to making a clear distinction between the divine Night and the Ahrimanian Darkness.[123] The black light is the light of the pure Essence in its ipseity, in its abscondity; the ability to perceive it depends on a spiritual state described as"reabsorption in God" (*fanā fī'llāh*), the state in which Semnanī perceives the danger of a supreme ordeal from which, according to him, the mystic rises again on the threshold of a *visio smaragdina*, the green light then being raised to the rank of the highest light of the Mystery. Comparative study of these visions is of exceptional interest; it would call for ample meditation and can only be outlined here.

While following the exact words of the poet, Lāhījī's commentary as it develops affords a glimpse of the precise lines of

its development as a series of steps. Three moments become distinct; namely, an effort to approach the idea of the black light from all sides, then to describe the superconsciousness it postulates, an unknowingness which, as such, is knowing; lastly this "luminous Night" is identified with the state of mystical poverty in the true sense, the very sense in which the Sufi is described as "poor in spirit" (*darwīsh*, dervish, *supra* III, 3).

To encompass the idea of black light is all the more difficult in that it bursts forth in a twofold way. It irrupts in the presence of things; it means a particular way of seeing them, which provides the author with the theme of the *black Face* of beings (*siyah-rū'i*). And it irrupts in the absence of things, when the intelligence, turning away from what is manifested, endeavors to understand *Who* is manifested and revealed. This is the theme of pure Essence, of divine Ipseity as *absolute Subject*, whose inaccessibility the author suggests by speaking of excessive proximity and bedazzlement. This is where the theme of mystical poverty brings a denouement to a dialectically inextricable situation: the coexistence of the absolute Subject and the individual subjects, of the One and the Many.

As for the first theme, there is no better means of placing it than by referring to Shaykh Lāhījī's own testimony, since on many occasions he illustrates his commentary with facts drawn from his personal experience. Here is his account of a vision:

> I saw myself [writes the Shaykh] present in a world of light. Mountains and deserts were iridescent with lights of all colors: red, yellow, white, blue. I was experiencing a consuming nostalgia for them; I was as though stricken with madness and snatched out of myself by the violence of the intimate emotion and feeling of the presence. Suddenly I saw that the *black light* was invading the entire universe. Heaven and earth and everything that was there had wholly become black light and, behold, I was totally absorbed in this light, losing consciousness. Then I came back to myself.

The recital of this vision at once suggests a comparison with one of the great ecstatic confessions of Mīr Dāmad; there is something in common between the black light swallowing up the universe and Mīr Dāmād's perception of the "great occult clamor of beings," the "silent clamor of their metaphysical distress."[124] The black light reveals the very secret of being, which can only *be*, as *made-to-be*; all beings have a twofold face, a face of

light and a black face. The luminous face, the face of day, is the only one that, without understanding it, the common run of men perceive, the apparent evidence of their act of existing. Their black face, the one the mystic perceives, is their poverty: they have nothing with which to be, they cannot be sufficient unto themselves in order to be what they have to be, it is the *inessence* of their essence. The totality of their being is their daylight face and their night face; their daylight face is the making of essence out of their inessence by the absolute Subject. This is the mystical meaning of the verse in the Qorān: "Everything perishes except His Face" (28:88), that is, except the face of light of that thing.

Now what those two faces show the visionary is the twofold dimension of being precisely analyzed in Avicenna's ontology as the dimension of necessary being and the dimension of "contingent" being. In fact, there is strictly speaking no "contingency." There is actualized possibility, and every possibility to be actualized necessarily exists from the very fact that its perfect cause, its sufficient reason, is given. It could not not be. However, this dimension of possibility remains latent in the heart itself of the actualized possibility, in the sense that its dimension of necessary being, its capacity to be, comes to it from its connection with the Source from which it emanates, whereas its dimension of possibility, that is to say, its metaphysical indigence, is perceived as soon as it regards itself—fictitiously, to be sure, and in a hypothetical way—as separated from the Principle whence its necessary being derives. As one knows, the entire Avicennan theory of the procession of the cherubinic Intelligences, the emanators of the Heavens and of the Earth, is based on acts of contemplation directed to these "dimensions" of intelligibility. The visionary irruption of this twofold dimension—positive and negative—is the vision of the black light.

Even from the primordial origin of the pleroma, from the eternal instant of the arising of the first of the Intelligences, the first of the Kerobin, Angel-Logos, the twofold dimension of every existentialized being is already manifested: its face of light and its "black face." This is what led certain Iranian Avicennans[125] to compare the Avicennan cosmology with the *Zervanist* cosmology of ancient Iran. No doubt there is a dia-

grammatic homology as regards the form but, as we have already noted elsewhere, this would be correct only if referred to "exorcised," "de-satanized" *Zervanism*. For the "black face" that shows itself from the first act of being is not Ahrimanian darkness, but the secret of the creatural condition that has its origin "in the darkness at the approaches to the *pole*," that is, in the very mystery of the setting up of creation. The Ahrimanian darkness is in the "extreme Occident," the region of materialized matter. That is why Lāhījī and the mystic on whom he is commenting repeat, exactly as Avicenna said in the recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan, that in "this darkness at the approaches to the pole" is to be found the Water of Life. To find this wellspring demands the penetration of the meaning of the twofold face of things, and to understand that is to understand at the same time the mystical implications of Avicenna's philosophy, attested by the perspectives it opened up to Iranian spirituals. Here alas! is where the impoverished rationalism of modern interpreters of Avicenna in the West reveals its impotence and incurable blindness. As Lahījī says, one does not learn to find the Water of Life in the Darkness simply by hearsay and by reading books.

The Avicennan analysis of the twofold dimension of established being bore fruit until the time of the renaissance of philosophy in Iran in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is present in the metaphysics of light elaborated by Sohravardī in terms of a metaphysics of *essence*, as well as in the work of his great interpreter, Molla Sadrā Shīrāzī (died 1640), who gave the *existential* version of the "oriental theosophy." It is traditionally repeated, from Molla Sadra down to Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'ī, the founder of the Shaykhite school in Shī'ism, that the act of existing is the dimension of light of beings, whereas their quiddity is their dimension of darkness. And this cannot be understood without going back to the Avicennan origins. The metaphysical indigence of beings analyzed in Avicennan ontology is translated and experienced by Lāhījī as a feeling of authentic mystical poverty. By experiencing this, the visionary contemplates the mysterious black Light that permeates the entire universe; it is certainly not the Ahrimanian inversion and subversion that transports him in ecstasy, but the Presence whose suprabeing consists in *causing-to-be* and which for that

reason can never itself be *caused-to-be*, nor seen as being—forever invisible while *causing to see* in its permanent actuation of each act of being.

That is why there is a profound connection between the meaning of the black Light perceived in the presence of things when they reveal to the visionary their twofold face, and its meaning as he perceives it when things absent themselves from him and he turns toward the Principle. These two themes are so deeply linked together that the second appears as the basis of the first. It is in the second sense that Lahījī declares that black is the color of the pure divine Ipseity in Itself, in the same way that to Najm Rāzī this color applied only to the attributes of inaccessible Majesty, to the *Deus absconditus*. When he comments on this verse of the *Rose Garden of Mystery*, "The *black* color, if you follow me, is *light* of pure Ipseity; within this Darkness is the Water of Life" (v. 123)—what does Lahījī mean in this case by speaking of a bedazzlement and a blindness whose cause is certainly not extreme distance but too great a proximity? The eye of inner vision, the "suprasensory senses" themselves, are darkened thereby.

To understand the shaykh's intention and his terminology, let us first recall the implications of Avicenna's ontology: the metaphysical indigence of beings, their *inessence*, implying that they would have nothing with which to be if necessary Being did not compensate for their lack. We referred just now to the existential version of the Avicenne-Sohravardian metaphysics in Mollā Sadrā: Sadrā gives the determinant metaphysical precedence to the act of existing, not to quiddity or essence. It can be said that Mollā Sadrā of Shīrāz, here as elsewhere, reveals his own formation as an Avicennan strongly imbued with the theosophy of Sohravardī and with that of Ibn 'Arabī. But well before him there were Spirituals in Iran who had read both Avicenna and Ibn 'Arabī. Lāhījī was one of them, and no doubt he was able to give the lie to misinterpretations inflicted in the West on the thought of his two masters, so different, incidentally, from each other. The famous expression *wahdat al-wojūd* does not signify an "existential monism" (it has no connection either with Hegel or with Haeckel), but refers to the transcendental unity of being. The act of being does not take on different meanings; it remains unique, while multiplying itself

in the actualities of the beings that it causes to be; an unconditioned Subject which is never itself *caused-to-be*. So this too-closeness spoken of by Lāhījī, the bedazzlement of black Light, is understood when every act of being or every act of light is related to its Principle.

In other words, light cannot *be seen*, precisely because it is what *causes seeing*. We do not see light, we see only its receptacles. That is why lights visible on suprasensory planes necessitate the idea of *pure colors*, as previously outlined, which are actualized *eo ipso* by their act of light as receptacles that are the "matter" of pure light, and not needing to fall into a matter foreign to their act of light. This being so, it is impossible to withdraw enough to *see* the light which is the *cause-of-seeing*, since in every act of seeing it is already there. This is the proximity that the mystic speaks of when he expresses his amazement "that you bring yourself so near to me that I come to think that you are me" (*supra* IV, 9). We can neither see light when there is nothing to receive it, nor where it is swallowed up. By trying to place ourselves in front of the *cause-of-seeing*, which itself can but remain invisible, we find ourselves in front of Darkness (and that is "the Darkness at the approaches to the pole"), for we cannot take as an *object* of knowledge precisely what enables us to know each object, what enables *any object* to exist as such. That is why Lāhījī speaks of a proximity that dazzles. On the other hand, the demonic *shadow* is not the light, itself invisible, which *causes seeing*, but is the Darkness that prevents seeing, as the darkness of the subconscious prevents seeing. The black light, on the other hand, is that which cannot itself be seen, because it is the cause of seeing; it cannot be object, since it is absolute Subject. It dazzles, as the light of *superconsciousness* dazzles. Therefore it is said in the *Rose Garden of Mystery*: "Renounce seeing, for here it is not a question of seeing." Only a knowledge which is a theophanic experience can be knowledge of the divine Being. But in relation to the divine Ipseity, this knowledge is a not-knowing, because knowledge presupposes a subject and an object, the seer and the seen, whereas divine Ipseity, black light, excludes this correlation. To transmute this unknowingness into knowledge would be to recognize *who* the true subject of knowledge is, in a supreme act of metaphysical renunciation, where Lāhījī testifies to his sense of the *poverty* of the dervish and to the fruit of his own meditation on Ibn 'Arabī.

§3. *Black Light in the "Rose Garden of Mystery"*

Here one will recall certain visionary apperceptions of Najm Kobrā: now the red sun standing out on a black background, now the constellations turning red against the background of an emerald Sky, dazzling to human vision. We have learned from him that this red sun and these reddening orbs announce the presence of the Angel-Logos or of one of the angelic Intelligences. As in Hermes' vision, angelophany is associated with the symbol of the "midnight sun," of luminous Night, because the first Intelligence, the Angel-Logos, is the initial and primordial theophany of the *Deus absconditus*. The profound meaning of an episode in the *mi'rāj* of the Prophet then emerges. The Angel Gabriel, as the angel of Revelation identified by all the *Ishrāqīyūn* with the angel of Knowledge, leads the prophet as far as the *Lotus of the limit*. He cannot himself go further, for he would be consumed by fire. Now, it is unthinkable that his theophanic being should be consumed and annihilated; that would mean self-destruction of the divine revelation. As Lāhījī explains, the Angel does not have to cross this *fanā fī'llāh*, the test of reabsorption into God. The theophanic form must persist in order to be met with again at the emergence from the supreme test, the sun becoming red against a black sky, as in Najm Kobrā's vision. The ordeal of this penetration, comprising an experience of death and annihilation, is for man alone to attempt, and marks his hour of greatest peril. Either he will be swallowed up in dementia or he will rise again from it, initiated in the meaning of theophanies and revelations. This resurgence is later translated by Semnānī as an exaltation from black light to green light. By passing thus through the annihilation of annihilation, by passing to the "Gabriel of your being," the recognition of the Guide is authenticated, of the "witness in Heaven," the reddening sun against the background of divine Darkness. For this recognition implies recognition of the Unknowable, which is to say metaphysical renunciation and mystical poverty.

The poet of the *Rose Garden of Mystery* asks: "What common measure is there between the Terrestrial and the divine worlds, that being unable to find knowledge should already of itself be knowledge?" (v. 125) And Lāhījī comments:

> The perfection of contingent being is to regress to its basic negativity, and to come to know through its own unknowingness.

It means to know with the certainty of experience that the *summum* of knowledge is unknowingness, for here there is infinite disproportion. This mystical station is that of bedazzlement, of immersion of the object in the subject. It is the revelation of the non-being of that which has *never been*, and of the perennity of that which has *never not been*. . . . In reality, there is no knowledge of God by *another* than God, for *another* than God *is not*. The ultimate end towards which the pilgrims of the divine Way proceed, is to arrive at the mystical station where they discover that the actions, attributes and ipseity of things are effaced and reabsorbed in the theophanic ray of light, and where they are *essencified* by the very fact of their essential destitution, which is the stage of absorption in God (*fanā fī'llāh*), where being is returned to being, non-being to non-being, in conformity with the verse of the Book: "God commands you to render that which is held in trust to whom it belongs" (4:61).

But the one to whom it belongs will be found only on condition that the seventh valley is reached.

The seventh is the valley of mystical poverty and of *fana*. After that you can go no further. It has been said that mystical poverty is the wearing of black raiment[126] in the two universes. This saying expresses the fact that the mystic is so totally absorbed in God that he no longer has any existence of his own, neither inwardly nor outwardly in this world and beyond; he returns to his original essential poverty, and that is poverty in the true sense. It is in this sense, when the state of poverty has become total, that a mystic can say that he is God, for that mystical station is where he gives divine Ipseity *absolute* meaning (it is *absolved* of all relativation) . . . So long as the mystic has not reached his own *negativity*, which is complete reabsorption, he has not reached the *positivity* of essencification by absolute being, which is superexistence through God. *To be non-being* by one's own efforts is the very same as *to be* through God. Absolute non-being is manifested only in and through absolute being. For any other than Perfect Man access to this degree is difficult, for Perfect Man is the most perfect of beings and the very cause of the coming into existence of the world.

Thus the metaphysical indigence of the being is transfigured into mystical poverty, absolute liberation from this indigence.

"How shall I find words to describe such a subtle situation? *Luminous Night, dark Midday*!" (v. 125), cries the poet further on in the *Rose Garden of Mystery*. His commentator knows what he means: for one who has experienced this mystical state an allusion is enough, whereas anyone else will be able to understand only to the degree of his proximity to it. And Lāhījī is fasci-

nated by this luminous Night (*shab-e roshan*) which is dark Midday, a mystical aurora borealis in which we ourselves recognize one of these "symbols of the north" which from the beginning have oriented our search toward an *Orient* not to be found in the East of our geographic maps. It is indeed *Night*, since it is *black* light and the abscondity of pure Essence, the night of unknowingness and of unknowableness, and yet *luminous* night, since it is at the same time the theophany of the *absconditum* in the infinite multitude of its theophanic forms (*mazahir*). *Midday*, middle of the Day, to be sure, that is, high noon of multicolored suprasensory light which the mystic perceives through his organ of light, his inner eye, as theophanies of the divine Names, attributes and acts; and yet *dark Midday*, since the multitude of these theophanic forms are also the 70,000 veils of light and darkness which hide the pure Essence (see *supra* Najm Razi's reference to this number). The *Night* of pure Essence, devoid of color and distinction, is inaccessible to the knowing subject as knower, since it precedes all his acts of knowing. The subject thus is rather the organ by which the Essence knows itself as absolute Subject. And *luminous Night* nevertheless, since it is what causes the subject to be by making itself visible to him, what *causes* him *to see* by *causing* him *to be*. *Dark Midday* of theophanic forms, certainly, because left to themselves they would be darkness and non-being, and because in their very manifestation, "they show themselves as hidden!"

But it is impossible to divulge the secrets of theophanies and of divine apparitions, that is to say, the secrets of the *shāhid*. One who does so incurs only violent reproaches and denials. "About the forms in which the traces of theophanies are present,[127] certainly I would have much to say, but to be silent is preferable" (v. 129). The *Rose Garden of Mystery* thus comes to an end. All Sufi visionaries agree with him, for he is alluding to the hypostasis of the divine Lights, whose colors, forms, and figures specifically correspond to the spiritual state and vocation of the mystic. This, therefore, is the very secret of the *shahid*, the Witness of contemplation, the "witness in Heaven," without which the Godhead would remain in the state of abscondity or abstraction, and there would be no possibility of that *uxority* which is the link between lover and beloved, a link

which is individual and unshareable, and to which every mystic soul aspires. God has no like (*mithl*), but He has an Image, a typification (*mithāl*), declares Lāhījī. This is the secret of the Prophet's vision tirelessly meditated upon by so many Sufis: "I have seen my God in the most beautiful of forms,"[128] attesting that the divine Being, without form or modality, is present to the eye of the heart in a particular form, modality, and individuation. For after the experience of the reabsorption of all the epiphanic forms in the "black light" of pure Essence, comes the resurgence from the danger of dementia, from metaphysical and moral nihilism, and from collective imprisonment in ready-made forms, the mystic, having understood what it is that assures the perennity of the determination of apparitional forms, of any given distinct epiphanic form. This is the authentic recognition of the figure of the heavenly Witness, the *shāhid*, whose recurrences we have studied under many and various names (*supra*, II and IV, 9). And that is why, in Semnānī, it is beyond the black light, the crossing of which he regards as perilous in the extreme, that the *visio smaragdina* begins to open.

VI. THE SEVEN PROPHETS OF YOUR BEING

1. Alāoddawleh Semnānī (1336)

His is one of the greatest names in Iranian Sufism. Thanks to his doctrine, the connection finally becomes clear between visionary apperceptions, graduated according to their coloration, and the "physiology of the man of light," that is, the physiology of the subtle organs whose growth is nothing other than the ontogenesis of the "resurrection body." It is the spiritual hermeneutics of the holy Book which give it structure: the spiritual *exegesis* of the revealed text coincides with the *exodus* of the man of light making his way step by step inward toward the *pole*, the place of his origin. In other words, the structure of the *seven* esoteric meanings of the Qorān exactly corresponds to the structure of a mystical anthropology or physiology connecting *seven* subtle organs or centers (*latīfa*), each of which is typified by one of the seven great prophets.

Having already dealt at some length elsewhere with this doctrine of Semnānī, we shall limit ourselves here to pointing out its essential features.[129] We shall recall only that the shaykh belonged to a noble family of Semnān (a city still flourishing today, situated some 200 kilometers to the east of Teheran). Born in 659/1261, he entered the service of Argun, the Mongol ruler of Iran, as a page, at the age of fifteen; when he was twenty-four, while camping with Argun's army in front of

Qazwīn, he underwent a profound spiritual crisis, asked to be relieved of his duties, and thereafter gave himself up once and for all to Sufism. He had his *Khānqāh* at Semnan itself, where a throng of disciples came to him and where his memory is still alive today; his sanctuary, a beautiful Mongol monument of delicate construction, was still extant until quite recently.

That the Qorān has a spiritual meaning, or rather several spiritual meanings, that everything exoteric has an esoteric aspect, and that the mode of being of the true believer depends on his knowledge of these spiritual meanings, was already affirmed from the earliest days of Islam; it expresses an essential aspect of Shī'ism, from which Imāmology is inseparable; this affirmation always provoked the disapproval of the orthodox Sunnite literalists. It is founded amongst other things on the *hadīth*, or reported saying of the Prophet himself: "the Qorān has an exoteric and an esoteric meaning [an outer appearance, a literal sense, and an inner depth, a hidden or spiritual sense]. In its turn, this esoteric meaning itself has an esoteric meaning [this depth has a depth, in the image of the heavenly Spheres enfolded the one within the other], and so forth, up to the seven esoteric meanings [seven depths of depth]."

The foundation and practice of these spiritual or esoteric hermeneutics are in fact bound up with a metaphysics of light, whose principal source is the *Ishrāq* of Sohravardī, and which operates similarly in the case of the Ishrāqīyūn, the Sufis, and the Ismaelians. In Semnānī, the physiology of the organs of light, the mystical anthropology, further accentuates the connection. This phenomenon has its counterpart in Latin Scholasticism, where interest in treatises on optics, the treatises *De perspectiva*, was fostered by the wish to ally the science of light to theology, just as it is allied here to Qorānic hermeneutics. The implication of the laws of optics in the study of the scriptures inspired, for example, the exegesis of Bartholomew of Bologna: "While in optics seven other modes of participation of bodies in light are known, Bartholomew finds seven corresponding modes of participation of the angelic and human intellects in the divine light."[130] Asín Palacios had already noted the essential affinity between the hermeneutics of the Islamic Esoterists and that of Roger Bacon. In neither case is there anything in the least arbitrary in their procedure; all

they do, in short, is to apply the laws of optics and perspective to the spiritual interpretation of the holy books.[131] Likewise, it is the application of the laws of perspective that makes it possible to produce diagrams of the spiritual world (as with the Ismaelians or in the school of Ibn 'Arabī). An overall comparative research would, of course, have to include here the procedures employed in the biblical interpretations of Protestant theosophists, such as those of the school of Jacob Boehme.

Unfortunately, what Semnānī was able successfully to achieve is only partially expressed in writing. His *Tafsīr*,[132] introduced by a long prologue in which he expounds his method, actually only begins from *sura 51*. The author's intention was to continue the unfinished *Tafsīr* of Najmoddīn Razī. He himself foresaw clearly what a colossal undertaking it would be to accomplish the project—a complete spiritual interpretation of the seven esoteric meanings of the Qoran. His reader appreciates the magnitude of the task while observing how the author takes care to bring out the seven meanings step by step, not in a theoretical way, but always concerned to relate them to spiritual experience, that is, to authenticate each meaning by relating it to the type and degree of spiritual experience which corresponds to a level of this or that depth (or height). This degree itself refers to the subtle organ which is its "place," just as it does to the color of the light that heralds it, and is the evidence that the mystic has arrived at this degree of visionary apperception.

The law of correspondences that governs these hermeneutics, and which is none other than the law governing all spiritual interpretation, can be stated as follows: there is homology between the events taking place in the outer world and the inner events of the soul; there is homology between what Semnānī calls *zamān āfāqī*, the "time of horizons" or "horizontal time," namely, the physical time of historical computation governed by the movement of the visible stars, and the *zaman anfosī*, or psychic time, the time of the world of the soul, of the *pole* governing the inner Heavens. This is exactly why each outer fact can be "led back" (the literal meaning of the word *ta'wīl*, used technically to describe spiritual exegesis) to the inner "region" corresponding to it. That region is one of the series of subtle organs of mystical physiology, each of which, due to the homology of times, is the typification of a prophet in

the human microcosm, whose image and role it assumes. Finally, each of these regions or organs is marked by a colored light which the mystic is able to visualize in a state of contemplation and to which he has to learn to be attentive because it informs him as to his own spiritual state.

The first of these subtle organs (envelopes or centers) is called the subtle bodily organ (*latīfa qalabīya; qalab*, lit. = the "mold"). Unlike the physical human body, it is constituted by direct influx emanating from the Sphere of spheres, the Soul of the world, without passing through the other Spheres, or of the planets or of the Elements. It cannot begin to be formed until after the completion of the physical body: having the form of a body, but in the subtle state, it is, so to say, the embryonic mold of the new body, the "acquired" subtle body (*jism moktasab*). This is why in mystical physiology it is symbolically called the *Adam of your being*.

The second organ is on the level corresponding to the soul (*latīfa nafsīya*), not the one which is the seat of spiritual processes, but of the vital, organic processes, the *anima sensibilis, vitalis*, and which consequently is the center of uncontrolled desires and evil passions; as such, it is called *nafs ammara* in the Qoran, and its role was described to us in Najm Kobra's trilogy (*supra* IV, 3). This means that the level to which it corresponds on the subtle plane is the testing ground for the spiritual seeker; in confronting his lower self, he is in the same situation as Noah facing the hostility of his people. When he has overcome it, this subtle organ is called the *Noah of your being*.

The third subtle organ is that of the heart (*latīfa qalbīya*) in which the embryo of mystical progeny is formed, as a pearl is formed in a shell. This pearl or offspring is none other than the subtle organ which will be the True Ego, the real, personal individuality (*latīfa anā'īya*). The allusion to this spiritual Ego, who will be the child conceived in the mystic's heart, immediately makes it clear to us why this subtle center of the heart is the *Abraham of your being*.

The fourth subtle organ is related to the center technically designated by the term *sirr* (*latīfa sirrīya*), the "secret" or threshold of superconsciousness. It is the place and organ of intimate conversation, secret communication, "confidential psalm" (*monājāt*): it is the *Moses of your being*.

The fifth subtle organ is the Spirit (*rūh*, *latīfa rūhīya*); because of its noble rank, it is rightfully the divine viceregent: it is the *David of your being*.

The sixth subtle organ is related to the center best described by the Latin term *arcanum* (*khafī*, *latīfa khafīya*). Help and inspiration from the Holy Ghost are received by means of this organ; in the hierarchy of spiritual states it is the sign of access to the state of *nabī*, prophet. It is the *Jesus of your being*; it is he who proclaims the Name to all the other subtle centers and to the "people" in these faculties, because he is their Head and the Name he proclaims is the seal of your being, just as in the Qorān (3:6) it is said that Jesus, as the prophet before the last of the prophets of our cycle, was the herald of *the last prophet*, i.e., of the advent of the Paraclete.[133]

The seventh and last subtle organ is related to the divine center of your being, to the eternal seal of your person (*latīfa haqqīya*). It is the *Mohammad of your being*. This subtle divine center conceals the "rare Mohammadan pearl," that is to say, the subtle organ which is the True Ego, and whose embryo begins to be formed in the subtle center of the heart, the *Abraham of your being*. Every passage in the Qorān which defines the relationship of Mohammad with Abraham then offers us an admirable example of the inward movement actualized by Semnānī's hermeneutics, the transition from "horizontal time" to the "time of the soul." It ends by actualizing, in the person of the human microcosm, the truth of the meaning according to which the religion of Mohammad originates in the religion of Abraham, for "Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian, but a pure believer (*hanīf*), a *Moslem* (3:60)," which is to say that the "Abraham of your being" is led through the subtle centers of higher consciousness and of the *arcanum* (the Moses and the Jesus of your being) until he reaches your true Ego, his spiritual progeny.

Thus the growth of the subtle organism, the physiology of the man of light, progresses through the seven *latīfa*, each of which is one of the *seven prophets of your being*: the cycle of birth and initiatic growth is homologous to the cycle of prophecy. The mystic is aware of this growth thanks to the apperception of colored lights which characterize each of the suprasensory organs or centers, to the observation of which Semnānī gave so

much attention. These lights are the tenuous veils enveloping each of the *latīfa*; their coloring reveals to the mystic which stage of his growth or journey he has reached. The stage of the subtle body at the level of its birth, still very close to the physical organism (the "Adam of your being"), is simply darkness, a *blackness* sometimes turning to smoke-grey; the stage of the vital soul (Noah) is *blue* in color; that of the heart (Abraham) is *red*; that of the superconscious (Moses) is *white*; that of the Spirit (David) is *yellow*; that of the arcanum (Jesus) is *luminous black* (*aswad nūrānī*); this is the "black light," the luminous Night about which we were informed by Najm Rāzī as well as by the *Rose Garden of Mystery* and its commentator; lastly the stage of the divine center (Mohammad) is brilliant *green* (the splendor of the Emerald Rock, *supra* III, 1 and IV, 6) for "the color green is the most appropriate to the secret of the mystery of Mysteries (or the suprasensory uniting all the suprasensories)."

We immediately notice three things: first of all that the colored lights, in Semnanī's account, differ in two ways from the account in Najm Rāzī's treatise (*supra* V, 2): their order of sequence is different and their term of reference. Unfortunately, we cannot go into detail here. Second, an explicit distinction is made between the darkness of the *black thing* (the black object which absorbs the colors, holds the "spark of light" captive) and the *luminous black, i.e.,* the black light, luminous Night, dark Midday, on which as we have seen, Lāhījī dwells at length in his Commentary on Shabestarī's *Rose Garden.* Somewhere between the two we glimpsed the situation of the world of colors in the pure state (*supra* V, 1). Lastly, unlike the authors just recalled, Semnānī has it that the final mystical station is marked, not by *black light* but by green light. This corresponds no doubt to a difference in the way each of these depths is innerly attained, *oriented.*

The rule applying to this movement inward, the turning away from the "world of horizons" toward the "world of souls" is pointed out by Semnānī as clearly as one could wish.

> Each time you hear in the Book words addressed to Adam, listen to them through the organ of the subtle body. . . . Meditate on that with which they symbolize, and be very sure that the esoteric aspect of the passage relates *to you*, just as the exoteric aspect relates to Adam in that it concerns the *horizons*. . . . Only then will you be able to apply the teaching of the divine Word to

> yourself and to cull it as you would a branch laden with freshly opened flowers.

And he continues in the same strain, from prophet to prophet.

The application of this rule governing the movement inward will itself show us why and how, from the point of view of the Islamic Sufi Semnanī, to pass through the *black light* typified by the "Jesus of your being" is the sign of a decisive, not to say dramatic step, but is not the ultimate stage of growth. The complete fulfillment of personal initiation comes to pass only when there is access to the seventh *latīfa*, the one enveloped in "the most beautiful color of all"—emerald splendor. In fact, Semnanī views the level of the subtle organ typified as the "Jesus of your being" as being exactly the perilous distracting stage whereat Christians in general and certain Sufis in Islam have been misled. It is worth our while to listen attentively to this evaluation of Christianity as formulated by a Sufi, for it differs profoundly from the polemics uttered by the offical heresy-hunting apologists who deny validity to all mystical feeling. Semnanī's critique is made in the name of spiritual experience; everything takes place as though this Sufi Master's aim were to perfect the Christian *ta'wīl*, that is, to "lead it back," to open the way at last to its ultimate truth.

By a striking comparison, Semnānī establishes a connection between the trap into which the Christian dogma of the Incarnation falls by proclaiming the *homoousia* and by affirming that 'Īsā ibn Maryam is God, and the mystical intoxication in which such as Hallāj cry out: "I am God" (*Anā'l-Haqq*). These dangers are symmetrical. On the one hand the Sufi, on experiencing the *fanā fi'llāh,* mistakes it for the actual and material reabsorption of human reality in the godhead; on the other, the Christian sees a *fanā* of God into human reality.[133a] This is why Semnanī perceives on the one side and the other the same imminent threat of an irregularity in the development of consciousness. The Sufi would need an experienced shaykh to help him avoid the abyss and to lead him to the degree that is in truth the divine center of his being, the *latīfa haqqīya*, where his higher, spiritual Ego opens. If not, the spiritual energy being wholly concentrated on this opening, it can happen that the lower ego is left a prey to extravagant thoughts and delirium. The

"scales" (*supra* IV, 10) are then completely unbalanced; in a fatal moment of looking back, the newborn higher Ego succumbs to what had been overcome and perishes in the moment of triumph. And this is just as true in the moral domain as in respect to the metaphysical perception of the divine and of being. It is a premature rupture of the process of growth, a "failed initiation." One could say that the mortal danger described by Semnanī on both sides is the very same situation with which the West came face to face when Nietzsche cried out: "God is dead."

This then is the peril which confronts the Spiritual seeker in the mystical station of the *black light* or *luminous darkness*. To sum up briefly Semnanī's conclusion (*Commentary to sura 112*), one could put it as follows: if both Sufi and Christian are menaced by the same danger, it is because there is a revelation and an opening up of the Ego corresponding to each of the *latīfa*. The danger in this case corresponds to the moment when the Ego makes its appearance (*tajallī*) on the level of the *arcanum* (whose color is black light and whose prophet is Jesus). If in the course of spiritual growth "intoxication" has not been completely eliminated, that is, the subconscious allurements of the level of the two first *latīfa*, then a lower mode of perception continues to function and Abraham's journey may remain forever unfinished. This is why the mystery of the theophany, the manifestation of the Holy Ghost in the visible form of the Angel Gabriel appearing in Maryam, his "breathing into" Maryam by which Jesus is made *Rūh Allah* (*Spiritus Dei*)—all of this—was not perceived by the Christians in their dogma of the Incarnation on the level of the *arcanum* (*latīfa khafīya*). They saw it on the level of data belonging still to the level of the first two *latīfa*. Their dogma would have the birth of the one God take place materially "on earth," whereas the "Jesus of your being" is the mystery of the spiritual birth. *i.e.*, of the assumption to Heaven. They saw the event in the *zamān āfaqī*, not in the *zamān anfosī*, that is, on the suprasensory plane where the real event takes place which is the advent of the Soul into the world of the Soul. The Sufi likewise, on the same level, deviates from the metaphysical poverty, mystical nakedness, which as we have seen (*supra* V, 3), is the secret of the black light. He shouts *Anā'l-Haqq* (I am God) instead of saying, as Ibn 'Arabi

reminds him, *Anā sirr al-Haqq*: "I am God's secret," the secret, that is, which conditions the polarity of the two faces, the face of light and the face of darkness, because the divine Being cannot exist without me, nor I exist without Him.

The symmetry of the dangers is reflected in a corresponding symmetry of spiritual therapeutics. The mystic has to be "carried away" to the higher spiritual Abode (to pass from the black Light to the green light), so that the nature of his True Ego may be revealed to him, not as an ego with the godhead as its predicate, so to say, but as being the organ and place of theophany; this means that he will have become fit to be invested in his light, to be the perfect *mirror*, the organ of the theophany. This is the state of the "friend of God," of whom the divine Being can say, according to the inspired *hadīth*, so oft-repeated by the Sufis: "I am the eye through which he sees, the ear through which he hears, the hand by which he touches . . ." This divine saying corresponds to the mystic's: "I am God's secret." Semnānī finds his inspiration regarding these spiritual therapeutics in a verse which he greatly values and in which the essence of Qoranic Christology is expressed: "They did not kill him, they did not crucify him, they were taken in by the appearance; God carried him off toward himself (4:156)," *i.e.*, he carried him off alive from death. Only an authentic "spiritual realism," suprasensory realism, can penetrate the arcanum of this verse. It demands a *polar* orientation rising above the dimension which is the only thing able to hold us back from the reality of the *event*, namely, the "horizontal" dimension of history. On the contrary, what the Sufi is seeking is not at all what we hypothetically call "the sense of history," but the inner sense of his being and of every being; not the material reality, the datum of earthly history-making (in the *zamān āfāqī*), but the "event in Heaven" which alone can save earthly man and bring him "home."

That being so, when you listen to some of God's sayings to his friend the Prophet, or allusions to them, listen to them, see them through the subtle organ which is the divine in you, the "*Mohammad of your being*" (*latīfa haqqīya*). The formation of heavenly man is completed in that subtle center. It is in that very place that the subtle body grows to its full stature, the body "acquired" by the mystic's spiritual practice and which contains

the "essential heart," the spiritual child of the "*Abraham of your being*," the one being who is capable of assuming the theophanic function of pure mirror ("specularity," *mirā'īya*).[134] The connection between spiritual hermeneutics and mystical physiology is fully revealed. The understanding of the hidden meanings and the growth of the subtle organism hidden in the human being develop concurrently—the growth "from prophet to prophet" culminating in the full prophetic stature. All the factors in Semnānī's theosophical cosmology have to be taken into account here. As the hidden meanings gradually come to be understood, the organs of the subtle physiology receive energies from universes preceding the sensory universe; these unite with the organs of the "body of immortality" which are at the core of the mystic's person much better than the "stars of his fate," since they are the "prophets of his being."

At this mystical stage, having reached his perfect spiritual stature, the mystic no longer needs to meditate on the ultimate *latīfa*, since from then on he *is* the "Mohammad of his being." At this very point we see the full meaning, in Semnānī, of the theophanic figure we have come to recognize under many and various names, which Semnānī for his part calls the *ostād ghaybī*, the suprasensory master or personal guide. This figure is clearly the *shaykh al-ghayb*, the Guide, the "witness in Heaven" of whom Najm Kobrā's visions informed us. Semnānī discreetly suggests its further role and function:

> Just as the physical sense of hearing [he writes] is a necessary condition if the hearer is to understand the exoteric meaning of the Qorān and receive the *tafsīr* from his outer, visible master (*ostād shahādī*), so the integrity of the heart, of the inner hearing is a necessary condition if the inspired Spiritual seeker (*molham*) is to understand the esoteric meaning of the Qorān and receive the *ta'wīl* of his inner suprasensory master (*ostad ghaybi*).

This passage, so admirably condensed and allusive, thus makes it clear that the inspired mystic's relationship with his *ostād ghaybī* is the same as Mohammad's relationship with the Holy Ghost which was his inseparable companion, just as it was for Jesus. This is why the supreme *latīfa* of the subtle organism is also related to the "Lotus of the Limit," the place where the Prophet saw the angel Gabriel standing in Paradise (53:14); and also why the pre-eminence of the color *green*, heralding the

highest mystical station, is supported by an allusion to the *raf-raf*, the *green* drapery seen by the Prophet covering the horizon of the Heavens, at the moment of his first vision of the Angel. And it is immediately clear also why the *latīfa* or subtle organ known as the "Mohammad of your being" should, from another aspect, be described as the *latīfa jabra'elīya*, the "angel Gabriel of your being." Here the *latīfa jabra'elīya* is, for the mystic, related with the Angel of Revelation just as Perfect Nature is related with the Angel of Humanity in Sohravardī's hermeneutics (*supra* II, 1). It can also be understood why so many Sufis, from Jalāl Rumī to Mīr Dāmād, have seen the annunciation of the Holy Ghost-Gabriel to Maryam in their meditations as an annunciation to every mystic soul. But one can go further also and conclude that the theophanic figure of the Angel of Revelation in prophetology, the Angel of knowledge in the "oriental theosophy" of the *Ishrāqīyūn*, is here the Angel of spiritual exegesis, that is to say, the one who reveals the hidden meaning of previous revelations, provided that the mystic possesses the ear of the heart, "celestial" hearing (*malakūtī*). To this extent the Angel has the same spiritual function as the Imām in Shī'ism, the *walāyat* of the Imām as the donor of the hidden meaning, and it would seem that Shī'ite Sufism alone makes the idea of the *walāyat* clear from all sides. But one can say that Semnānī's spiritual doctrine and method comes in the end to the radical inner realization both of prophetology and of Imāmology. And this alone is what makes a "Mohammadan."

> He who has become conscious of this *latīfa*, who has reached it by journeying, step by step, by winged flight or ecstasy, who has allowed the powers of all his subtle organs to open in freedom from the taint of illusion and relativity, who has allowed them to be demonstrated as they should be demonstrated in the pure state, he it is indeed who can truly be called a Mohammadan. Otherwise, make no mistake; do not believe that the fact of uttering the words "I affirm that Mohammad is God's Messenger" is enough to make you a Mohammadan.

2. *The World of Colors and the Man of Light*

The preceding analyses have repeatedly shown us that there was an affinity, sometimes subtle, sometimes explicit, between Sufism and Manicheism revealed in their physics and

metaphysics of light. It would be a fascinating task to pursue the traces of this affinity in iconography; more fascinating still if we notice the cross-references between Sufism and Christianity, which we can easily foresee are leading us toward Christian representations not altogether those of official and historical Christianity. Semnānī's indications would already suffice to put us on the track. The central truth of Christianity may be conceived in terms of hypostatic union of divinity and humanity; it may be thought out in terms of theophany (*tajallī*). The first way was that of the Great Church; we need hardly recall how this appeared in the judgment of the whole of Islamic theology. The second way was followed by those who refused the implied contradiction, whether they happened to be Valentinians or Manicheans, an Apollinarious of Laodicea or, among the Protestant Spirituals, a Schwenckfeld or a Valentin-Weigel. This does not in the least mean that they developed a mythological Christology; they affirmed the idea of a *caro Christi spiritualis*.

If we wish to understand the import of the criticisms voiced by a Sufi like Semnanī, as well as the profound intentions of Shī'ite Imamology, this way of representing it is what we have to keep in mind, for it implies great consequences for the science of religions in general. This "spiritualized realism" has at its disposal the whole substance of the "heavenly Earth of Hūrqalyā" for *giving body* to the psycho-spiritual and to spiritual events. We have seen Semnānī reveal the danger exactly corresponding to that which threatens Sufism: no longer indeed a *fanā fī'llāh,* but on the contrary a *fanā,* of the divine in human reality. If Semnānī had used a modern man's terminology, he would have spoken of historicization, secularization, socialization—not as of phenomena taking place among others in the *zamān āfāqī,* the "horizontal time" of material historicity, but as of the phenomenon itself of the fall of the *zamān anfosī,* a psycho-spiritual time, into the *zamān āfāqī.* In other words, falling from events which *are made* by the history of the soul to a history which *is made* by outer events. The first are in no way mythology, and the iconography that represents them in no way consists of allegories. But, of course, intentions and procedures differ profoundly according to the one or the other category of events. Already one can get an idea of the contrast by referring on the

one hand to the iconography of the *Christus juvenis* of the very first centuries of Christianity (a few types were mentioned above, II, 2) and on the other hand, either, in the Eastern Church, to the iconography of the *pantokrator* endowed with all the attributes of maturity and virility,[135] or, in the Western Church, to the iconography of the suffering and crucified Jesus.

What the latter translates is the tendency to attribute to the divine the human reality of everyday life, even to its confusions and miseries: the idea that God could only save man by becoming man in this sense. In contrast, what the first translates is the idea that God can only come in contact with humanity by transfiguring the latter; that the salvation of man imprisoned in Ahrimanian Darkness can be nothing other than an assumption to Heaven, operated by the all-powerful attraction of the divine Light, without the latter having to nor being able to be made captive, for then the possibility of salvation would be abolished. The preparation and expectation of this triumph are exactly what fill the acts of the Manichean dramaturgy of salvation. This soteriology, the liberation of the "particles of light" taken up from their prison and at last rejoining their like, is exactly that of a Sohravardī and of a Semnanī. Hence their metaphysics of light surrounding their physiology of the man of light, itself centered around the presence or the attraction of a Perfect Nature or of a "witness in Heaven," who is for the individuality of the mystic the homologue of the heavenly Twin of Manī, that is to say, Christ or the Virgin of light. This return of "light to light" as a suprasensory event is what Manichean painting intended to make available to sensory perception. If iconography reveals an affinity between its methods and those of Persian miniatures, this will show us another affinity in depth.

And so this deep affinity, discernible in the affinity between the technical processes of Manichean iconography and Persian miniatures, is the very one which operated in the eighth and ninth centuries of our era, within the spiritual circles where Shī'ite gnosis was formed.[136] The very same idea which dominates Shī'ite philosophy, that of the Imam and of Imāmology, determines a structure to which three fundamental themes are available, in which the affinity between Shī'ite gnosis and Manichean gnosis is discovered. Of these three themes, the theme

of the *walāyat* is perhaps dominant, because it crystallizes around it the theme of the cycles of Prophecy and the theme of the spiritual sciences of nature, alchemy, and astrology, which are the bases of Manichean cosmology and biology.

The theme of the *walāyat* has already come up here, whether apropos of the vision of the seven *abdāl*, the seven stars near the *pole*, according to Ruzbehān, or apropos of the esoteric hierarchy, organized in the image of the celestial dome whose keystone is the *pole* (the hidden Imām) and which fills the function of cosmic salvation (*supra* III, 2 and 3). We saw it appear again, a few pages ago, apropos of the idea of the inner master, *ostād ghaybī*, "the angel Gabriel of your being," who, in his role of initiator in the hidden meaning of the revelations, appeared in Semnanī as the "inner Imam" and besides as an interiorization of Imāmology. We have already pointed out the difficulty of translating simultaneously the aspects connoted by the term: the difficulty is due no doubt to the fact that the implied structure has nothing exactly corresponding to it in the West, except among the Spirituals incidentally referred to above. This religious structure is quite different from all that we habitually designate by the word "Church"; it provides in each of the cycles of Prophecy (*nobowwat*), a cycle of Initiation (*walāyat*) to the hidden meaning of the revealed letter. Shī'ite gnosis, as an initiatic religion, is an initiation in a doctrine. This is why it is particularly unsatisfactory to translate, as is often done, *walāyat* as "holiness." What this term connotes, namely the canonic idea of holiness, is very far from the point. *Walāyat* as an initiation and as an initiatic function, is the spiritual ministry of the Imām whose charisma initiates his faithful in the esoteric meaning of the prophetic revelations. Better still, the Imāmate *is* this very meaning. The Imām as *walī* is the "grand master," the master of initiation (thus transposed to another level, the twofold exoteric acceptation of the word *walī* can be conserved: on the one hand, friend, companion; on the other, lord, protector).

The second theme, that of the cycles of Revelation, is implied in the very idea of the *walāyat*. The *walāyat* postulates in fact, as we have just said, a theory of the cycles of Prophecy: prophetology and Imamology are two inseparable lights. Now, this theory of cycles of Revelation, although in Ismaelian gnosis

it has features reminding of the theme of the *Verus Propheta* in Ebionite Christianity, is well known to be a Manichean theory. On the other hand, the "physiology of the man of light," the growth of subtle organs, is modelled in Semnanī, as we have seen, on this same theory of cycles of Prophecy. The subtle organs are respectively the "prophets of your being": their growth into a "body of resurrection," in striking correspondence with the cycle of resurrections of the adept in Islamic gnosis, is the microcosmic actualization and the knowledge of the cycles of Prophecy.

Finally, as the third theme, alchemy and astrology, as the spiritual sciences of nature, are fundamental to the Manichean soteriology of light; we have also heard Najm Kobrā call the seeker the "particle of light" imprisoned in Darkness, and declare that his own method was none other than that of alchemy. This alchemical operation is what produces the aptitude for visionary apperception of the suprasensory worlds, these being manifested by the figures and constellations which shine in the Skies of the soul, the Sky of the Earth of Light. These spiritual constellations are the homologues of those interpreted in esoteric astronomy (*supra* III, 3), thus exemplifying on both sides one and the same figure dominating the *Imago mundi*: the Imām who is the *pole*, just as in terms of spiritual alchemy he is the "Stone" or the "Elixir."

These are the three themes constructed on parallel lines in Manichean gnosis and in Shī'ite gnosis, which amplify and explicate the fundamental motif of the *theophany*, whose presuppositions and implications have been recalled above. Now, this theophanic feeling common to Shī'ism and to Sufism (and which triumphs particularly in Shī'ite Sufism), determines the Shī'ite apperception of the person of the Imām, as it determines the apperception of beauty in those of the Sufis, disciples of Ruzbehan of Shīraz for example, to whom in particular we have restricted the designation "fedeli d'amore." Consequently we have to appeal to this same fundamental theophanic feeling in order to account for common pictorial techniques in iconography. The person of the Imām (that is to say, the eternal Imam in his twelve personal exemplifications in the case of Twelve-Imām Shī'ism) is the pre-eminent theophanic form (*mazhar*). The person of the *shāhid*, the beautiful

being chosen as the witness of contemplation, is for the "fedele" his personal theophanic form; in the course of this study we have identified this figure under diverse names. There is something in common between the chivalric devotion that binds the Shī'ite adept to the theophanic person of the Imām and the loving service that binds the mystic lover to the earthly form through which the pre-eminent divine Attribute—beauty—is revealed to him. The historical origins of this mutual inclination will perhaps never be definitively clarified; it is established at the time and in the spiritual circles that we have recalled above. What holds the attention of the phenomenologist is the testimony of states experienced; the Manichean feeling of the drama of the universe was particularly fitted to develop the feeling of a personal covenant of fidelity; the whole ethic of Shī'ism and Iranian Sufism culminates in the idea of *javānmardī*, that is to say "of spiritual chivalry."

From here on, it becomes possible to fully evaluate the testimony that we owe to a writer of the eleventh century, Abu Shakur Salimī, a writer who describes for us how the Manicheans of Central Asia were marked by a form of worship which was the passionate adoration they professed in regard to beauty and all beautiful beings. In our day objections have been raised to this testimony which cancel themselves out by the fact that they show purely and simply a confusion between the implications of the Manichean physics of light and with what we habitually think of in the West in terms of hypostatic union. Hence the warning that we repeated at the beginning of the present chapter: the pure philologist had better keep out of the closed field of philosophy than enter it with ill-adapted weapons.[137]

If one thinks in terms of theophany (*tajallī*, *zohūr*), not in terms of hypostatic union, one is speaking only of a corporeal receptacle (*mazhar*), which fills the role and function of a *mirror*. This receptacle, *caro spiritualis*, can be perceived in various ways; the alchemy of which Najm Kobrā speaks produces the aptitude for this perception by working on the organs of perception of the contemplator (for which and through which, as we have heard Najm Rāzī declare, events are at the same time sensory and suprasensory). This is why we have been reminded

many times that the vision varies in proportion to the aptitude: your contemplation is worth what you *are*. And so the Ismaelian authors, Abū Ya'qūb Sejestānī among others, lay stress, as though to forestall the above-mentioned ill-founded objections, on the fact that beauty is not an attribute immanent in physical nature, nor a material attribute of the flesh; physical beauty is itself a spiritual attribute and a spiritual phenomenon. It can be perceived only by the organ of light; perception of it effects, as such, from now on the passage from the sensory to the suprasensory plane. Perhaps Abū Shakūr's description exaggerates in detail some of the features common to the Manicheans and the Hallājian Sufis, but, as L. Massignon wrote, "his description summarizes the essential character of that peculiar development of crystalline aesthetic sentimentality, as transparent as a rainbow, which Islam derived from a rather dramatic Manichaean concept, that of the imprisonment of particles of the divine light in the demoniac matrix of matter."

Here we have the fundamental esthetic feeling, persisting in a variety of developments, which is here expressed by a common pictorial technique. Mānī has been traditionally regarded in Islam as the initiator of painting and the greatest master of that art (in classical Persian, the terms *nagarestan*, *nagar-khaneh*, are used as signifying the "house of Mānī" to designate a gallery of paintings, a book of painted pictures). Everyone knows that the purpose of his painting was essentially didactic; it was intended to lead vision beyond the sensory: to incite love and admiration of the "Sons of Light," horror of the "Sons of Darkness." The liturgical illumination so highly developed by the Manicheans was, essentially, a scenography of the "liberation of the light." With this aim in view, the Manicheans were led to represent light in their miniatures by precious metals. If we associate the persistence of the Manichean technique and its decorative themes with the resurgence of the Manichean physics of light in the "oriental theosophy" of Sohravardī, and above all in certain psalms composed by him,[138] then we will be the better able to keep in mind longer all that is still being suggested by these lines of L.Massignon:

> The art of Persian miniatures, without atmosphere, without perspective, without shadows, and without modelling, in the metallic splendour of its polychromy, peculiar to itself, bears wit-

ness to the fact that its originators were undertaking a kind of alchemic sublimation of the particles of divine light imprisoned in the "mass" of the picture. Precious metals, gold and silver, come to the surface of the fringes and crowns, of the offerings and cups, to escape from the matrix of the colours.

Escape, ascent and deliverance: this is also what visions of colored lights heralded for Najm Kobra; colors in the pure state, suprasensory, freed from the Ahrimanian darkness of the *black object* which had absorbed them, and restored, just as they were opened up to the divine Night "at the approach to the pole," in the *Terra lucida* "which secretes its own light" (*supra* III, 1). In this pure luminescence we recognize one Iranian representation above all others: the *Xvarnah*, the light-of-glory which, from their first beginning, the beams of light establish in their being, of which it is at once the glory (δοξα) and the destiny (τυχη) (supra II, 3). This is what in iconography has been represented as the luminous nimbus, the *aura gloriae* which haloes the kings and priests of the Mazdean religion; this way of representing it has been transferred to the figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as also the heavenly figures of primitive Christian art. It is the *Xvarnah* that forms the vermillion-gold background of many Manichean paintings of Turfan and of the paintings in certain Persian manuscripts of the school of Shīrāz, survivals of the celebrated mural paintings of the Sassanids.

Let us make no mistake as to the meaning of these red-gold background colors, when we find them again in the gold background of the Byzantine icons and mosaics. Whether it is a question of the nimbus of personages or of the visionary geography of what has been called "*xvarnah* landscapes" (Strzygowski), it remains always a question of the same transfiguring light: lights returning to their origin or lights descending to meet them as far as the surface of the objects out of which they attract them. There is neither contrast nor rupture in the idea, only the prolongation and persistence of one and the same idea. For in the whole of Eastern Christianity there is always a latent monophysitism in which lies the same and imperative desire for transfiguration, *caro spiritualis Christi*, of which the *fanā fi'llāh* of Sufism is perhaps at once the previsioning or the accomplishment. For contrast and rupture, we have

to look elsewhere: there where the Shadow and the shadows have definitively banished this light from iconography.

3. The "Physiological" Colors According to Goethe

We shall not attempt to recapitulate the leading themes of the present study; our concern is not to come to conclusions; the aim of true research is to open the way to new questions. Among the questions which remain to be formulated or developed, there is one that at this very moment spontaneously arises. What we have analyzed referring to visionary apperceptions, suprasensory senses, subtle organs or centers that develop in conjunction with a growing interiorization—in brief, all the themes constituting a "physiology of the man of Light"—have shown us that the colored photisms, the suprasensory perceptions of colors in the pure state, result from an inner activity of the subject and are not merely the result of passively received impressions of a material object. Whoever is familiar with or in sympathy with Goethe's *Farbenlehre* (his *theory* or rather his *doctrine of colors*) inevitably wonders whether there is not a fruitful comparison to be attempted between our "physiology of the man of light" and Goethe's idea of "physiological colors."

Let us keep in mind some of Najm Kobrā's principal themes, for example that the object of the search is the divine Light and the seeker is himself a particle of this light; that our method is the method of alchemy; that like aspires to its like; that like can be seen and known only by its like. It certainly seems then that Goethe had himself mapped out the way for anyone wishing to respond to the Iranian Sufi's invitation to penetrate to the heart of the problem:

> The eye [writes Goethe], owes its existence to light. From an auxiliary, sensory apparatus, animal and neutral, light has called forth, produced for itself, an organ like unto itself; thus the eye was formed by light, of light and for light, so that the inner light might come in contact with the outer light. At this very point we are reminded of the ancient Ionian School, which never ceased to repeat, giving it capital importance, that like is only known by like. And thus we shall remember also the words of an ancient mystic that I would paraphrase as follows:

If the eye were not by nature solar,
How should we be able to look at the light?
If God's own power did not live in us,
How would the divine be able to carry us off in ecstasy?"[139]

One can leave it to the Iranian Sufis who have been quoted here to make for themselves the spontaneous association of their testimony with that of the anonymous mystic of old whom Goethe calls as witness. The idea of a "physiology of the man of light," as outlined in Najm Kobra's theory of the suprasensory senses and Semnanī's theory of subtle organs enveloped in color, links up with Goethe's vast scheme, where the author assigns priority to the "physiological colors" in heading his great work and, in its amplification, even treats explicitly the mystic significance of colors and of the experience of colors. The point is that the term "physiology" in no way refers here to some kind of material organism, but to something that rationalist science tries to do without in accepting nothing apart from sensory, empirical data except abstract ideas available to the ordinary mind. Goethe likewise begins by reminding us that the phenomenon he designates as the phenomenon of "physiological colors" has been known for a very long time; unfortunately, due to the radical lack of an appropriate phenomenology, it has been neither comprehensible nor given its proper value; there has been discussion of *colores adventici*, *imaginarii*, *phantastici*, *vitia fugitiva*, *ocular spectra*, etc. In short, these colors have been regarded as something of an illusory, accidental, insubstantial nature, and relegated to the realm of dangerous fantasies, because a concept of the universe wherein physical reality is regarded as total reality, in fact, no longer allows the suprasensory to be seen otherwise than as spectral. In contrast, we have here learned to see something quite different in the suprasensory world of which our Sufis have been speaking. And this "something quite different" is in accord with what is affirmed in the *Farbenlehre*, which postulates that the colors referred to therein as "physiological" pertain to the subject, to the organ of sight, to the "eye which is itself light," and what is more, that these colors are the very conditions of the act of seeing, which remains incomprehensible if it is not viewed as an interaction, a reciprocal action.[140]

The term "physiological," applied to colors for this reason, gradually takes on its full meaning and justification to the degree that the notion of the "subject" in question unfolds. There is essentially a refusal to admit pure exteriority or extrinsicity, as if the eye did no more than *passively* reflect the outer world. The perception of color is an action and reaction of the soul itself which is communicated to the whole being; an energy is then emitted through the eyes, a spiritual energy that cannot be weighed or measured quantitatively (it could be evaluated only by the mystical *scales* of which Najm Kobra has spoken, *supra* IV, 10). "The colors we see in bodies do not affect the eye as if they were something foreign to it, as if it were a matter of an impression received purely from outside. No, this organ is always so situated as to produce colors itself, to enjoy a pleasant sensation if something homogeneous to its nature is presented to it from outside" (§760). And this because colors only occasionally modify the latent determinative capacity or power which is the eye itself. The affirmation returns continually as a *leitmotiv* to the fact that the eye at this point produces another color, its *own* color. The eye searches at the side of a given colored space for a free space where it can produce the color called for by itself. This is an effort toward totality involving the fundamental law of chromatic harmony,[141] and this is why "if it happens that the totality of colors is presented to the eye from the outside as an object, the eye takes pleasure in it because at such a moment its own activity is presented to it as a reality" (§808).

Is there not a similar phenomenon of totality in the reunion of the two fiery lights issuing the one from Heaven, the other from the earthly person, which Najm Kobrā perceived as the theophanic form of his "witness in Heaven" (*supra* IV, 9), that is to say, of the heavenly counterpart conditioning the whole of his being? And what justifies the comparison are the very words of the old mystic adopted by Goethe and paraphrased in the introduction to his own book.

From the mutual exchange between like and like, from the interaction thus suggested in general, the idea of specific actions begins to become clearer; these actions are never arbitrary and their effects are sufficient to attest that "physiological

color" as such is an experience of the soul, that is, a spiritual experience of color itself:

> From the idea of polarity inherent in the phenomenon, from the knowledge that we have reached of its particular determinations, we can conclude that particular impressions of colors are not interchangeable, but that they act in a specific way and must produce conditions having a decisive specific effect on the living organism. The same applies to the soul (*Gemüt*): experience teaches us that particular colors produce definite mental impressions.[142]

These are the impressions on which the meanings of colors are based, rising by degrees to their mystical meaning, the very meaning which has held the whole attention of our Iranian Sufi masters. On the subject of these meanings, the *Farbenlehre* concludes in a series of admirable pages: "All that has been said has been an attempt to show that each color produces a definite effect on the human being and by that very fact reveals its essential nature to the eye as well as to the soul. It follows that color can be used for certain physical, moral, and aesthetic purposes." It can also be used for another purpose which makes use of the effect and expresses still better its *inner meaning*, namely, the *symbolic* use which Goethe carefully distinguishes from the allegorical (in contrast with our habit, which unfortunately is more often than not to confuse allegory and symbol).[143]

> Finally it will be easy to foresee that color can assume a *mystical significance*. In effect, the schema in which the diversity of colors is represented suggests the archetypal conditions (*Urverhältnisse*) that belong equally to man's visual perception and to nature; that being established, there is no doubt that one can make use of their respective relationships, as of a language, if one wishes to express those archetypal conditions, which do not of themselves affect the senses with the same force or with the same diversity.[144]

And this is in fact the language in which the colored photisms spoke to all Najm Kobrā disciples, because color is not a passive impression, but the language of the soul to itself. Thus, in the heptad of colors, Semnānī perceived the heptad of the organs of the man of light, the heptad of the "prophets of his being."

The final point made by Goethe may allow us to perceive

how the spiritual experience of color can initiate in the revelation of the "witness in Heaven," the heavenly Guide of whom Sohravardī, Najm Kobra, Semnanī, have all spoken.

> If the polarity of yellow and blue has truly been grasped, if in particular their intensification into red has been well noted and it has become clear how these opposites tend toward one another and reunite in a third color, then it cannot be doubted that the intuition of a profound secret is beginning to dawn in us, a foretaste of the possibility that a spiritual meaning might be attributed to these two separate and mutually opposed entities. When they are seen to produce *green* below and *red* above, one can hardly refrain from thinking that one is contemplating here the earthly creatures and there the heavenly creatures of the *Elohim* (§919).

Once again the words of the anonymous mystic adopted by Goethe are what enable us to foresee the total convergence between Goethe's doctrine of color and the physics of light of our Iranian mystics, on whose side it represents a tradition going back to ancient pre-Islamic Persia. The indications we have received were elusive. Quite a number of questions will remain in the air, but it was worth while taking the necessary steps to open them. To the extent that Goethe's optics is an "anthropological optics," it runs counter to the requirements and habits of what is called the scientific mind, and will continue to do so. It is the scientists' business to pursue the aim they have set for themselves. But here we are concerned with a different question, a different aim, common to those who have experienced in similar fashion the "action of Light."

This aim is the superexistence of the higher personal individuality, attained by reunion with the individual's own dimension of Light, his "face of light," that gives the individuality its total dimension. For this reunion to be possible the inclination toward the "polar dimension" must have opened in the terrestrial being, the inclination heralded by fugitive flashes of superconsciousness. The physiology of the man of light tends toward this opening—this is what Semnānī was expressing when he spoke of the spiritual child which the "Abraham of your being" must procreate. Najm Kobrā admits having meditated for a long time before he understood *who* was this light that flamed in the Sky of his soul while the flame of his own being was rising to meet it. If he understood that the light

sought was there, it was because he knew *who* was *seeking* the light. He himself told us this: "What is sought is the divine Light, the seeker is himself a particle of the light." "If God's own power were not living in us, how would He be able to transport us in ecstasy?" The mystic of old who inspired the prologue of the *Farbenlehre* was asking the same question.

The literal concordance of the evidence allows us, so far, to consider the investigation of the origins and causes of the "physiological colors" as the search for experimental verification of the physiology of the man of light, that is to say of the phenomena of colored lights perceived and interpreted by our Iranian Sufis. On the one side and on the other, the same Quest of the man of light, and the answer to both has been, so to speak, given in advance by Mary Magdalen, in the book of the *Pistis Sophia*, when she says: "The man of light in me," "my being of light," has understood these things, has brought out the meaning of these words (*supra* II, 1). Who is sought? Who is the seeker? The two questions, belonging together, cannot remain theoretical. In every case the revealing light has preceded the revealed light, and phenomenology does no more than uncover later the already accomplished fact. It is then that the five senses are transmuted into other senses. *Superata tellus sidera donat*: "And the earth transcended brings us the gift of the stars" (Boethius).

NOTES

I. ORIENTATION

1. A brief note on the transcriptions adopted: because of the unavoidable necessity for typographical simplification, diacritical marks have been sacrificed; hence, the emphatic consonants of the Arabic alphabet (*d, t, s, z*) are not distinguished from the ordinary consonants either in the Arabic or Persian words. Similarly, the *hamza* and the *'ayn* are both transcribed simply by an apostrophe. As for the others, *h* always represents an aspiration; *kh* = the German *ch* or Spanish *j* (likewise the *x* in words derived from the Avesta). The macron accent represents the *scriptio plena*, *ū* is pronounced as in "food."

2. On the ancient *Mappae mundi* representing an ideal *divisio orbis* in which the East figures at the top, while Jerusalem is in the center, see the evocative remarks of L.-I. Ringbom, *Graltempel und Paradies* (Stockholm, 1951), p. 254 ff.

2a. *The Gospel according to Thomas*, Coptic text established and translated by A. Guillaumont, H.-C. Puech, *et al.* (London, 1959), log. 3, pp. 3, 19-26.

3. See our work on *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (hereafter ref. *Avicenna*), translated from the French by Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series, LXVI (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960) Pt. II, Ch. 12, 13, and 18, comm. 4. At the time of publication this work appears to have caused some surprise, because it was entirely conceived in the Iranian perspective, with all its implications. Some people do not *see* Avicenna except clothed in his Latin scholastic armor. Furthermore, full comprehension of any author demands that one take into account the manner in which his thought was in fact a living part of the experience of the spiritual environment in which he was recognized; the pretext of taking into account only earlier texts (which he himself may not have known) is a device used for erroneous, historical "explanation." Still worse, anyone is free to profess the rationalism which suits him, but this does not authorize him to advance misinterpretations, particularly in reference to the word "esoteric" (*τα εσω, bāṭin*, as opposed to *τα εξω, ẓāhir*). Avicenna's visionary recitals form a trilogy; to isolate one or another of them is the surest way of not seeing their meaning. As the authors quoted in the present book frequently remind us, like can only be known by like; every mode of understanding corresponds to the mode of being of the interpreter. I am too convinced of this not to recognize how hopeless it is to try to convey the meaning of symbols to people who are blind to them. The Gospel parable of the Feast (Matt. 22:2-10; Lk. 14:16-24) means precisely what it says, even from the scientific point of view. It would be ridiculous to engage in polemics against the men or the women who refuse to come to the feast; their refusal inspires only sadness and compassion.

II. THE MAN OF LIGHT AND HIS GUIDE

4. See *Avicenna*, Pt. I, pp. 231-234; W. Scott, *Hermetica*, IV (Oxford, 1936):106 (Greek text), 108, 122, 124-125; J. Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina* (Heidelberg, 1926), pp. 26-28 (German translation).

5. *'α=ανατολη* (rising, east);*δ=δύσις* (setting, west); *α='αρκτος* (the Bear, north); *μ = μεσημβρία* (midday, south).

6. See Carl Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften, I, Die Pistis Sophia . . .*, 2te

Auflage bearbeitet . . . von Walter Till (Berlin, 1954), pp. 189, l. 12; 206, l. 33; 221, l. 30.

7. See our *En Islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), II, Bk. II, Ch. VI, "Le Recit de l'exil occidental et la geste gnostique"; Hans Soderberg, *La Religion des Cathares* (Uppsala, 1949), p. 249. See also the rather obscure verse 30 in *The Gospel according to Thomas*, p. 21 of the edition cited above (and the anxiety provoked in Aphraate, the "Persian Sage," trans. J. Doresse, p. 167).

8. Pseudo-Magrītī, *Das Ziel des Weisen, I*, Arabischer Text, hrsgb. v. Hellmut Ritter, *Studien der Bibliothek Warburg*, XII (Leipzig, 1933). This is the work of which a medieval Latin translation was published under the title of *Picatrix* (Arabic *Būqratīs* = Ἱπποκράτης, Hippocrates). See also our study *Rituel sabéen et exégese ismaelienne du rituel, Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XIX (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1951).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 193. The entire chapter concerning the Perfect Nature is supposed to be derived from a *Kitab al-Istamakhīs*, in which Aristotle pours out advice to Alexander and instructs him how to invoke his Perfect Nature, following the example of Hermes.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 194; See *En Islam iranien, loc. cit.*

11. These are the very words which are reported in the well-known *"hadīth* of the vision" to have been uttered by the Prophet; See our *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, trans. from the French by Ralph Mannheim, Bollingen Series, XCI (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 272 ff. (hereafter abbreviated as *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*).

12. *Das Ziel des Weisen*, p. 188.

13. See the well-known verse in the Qorān, the Light (24:35), part of which has been included here as the epigraph to Ch. I: "The image of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. . . . "

14. See J. Ruska, *Tabula smaragdina*, pp. 134-135 (Arabic text) and pp. 138-139 (German trans.). The "Guarded Tablet" (*lawh mahfūz* 85:22) on which the archetype of the Qoran is written, has been identified by some adepts with the *Tabula smaragdina*. Regarding the emerald brilliance shining here in the night, compare the relationship between the green light and the "black light" in Semnānī, *infra* VI.

15. See the texts cited in our *En Islam iranien*, II, Bk. II, Ch. III and VI.

16. See *Avicenna* Pt. I, pp. 88-90. Regarding Abū'l-Barakat, see principally S. Pinès, *Nouvelles etudes sur . . . Abū'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Mémoires de la Societe des Etudes juives*, I (Paris, 1955); *Studies in Abū'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's Poetics and Metaphysics, Scripta Hierosolymitana*, VI (Jerusalem, 1960).

17. See our edition of this work in Sohravardī, *Opera metaphysica et mystica*, I, *Bibiliotheca Islamica*, XVI (Leipzig-Istanbul, 1945):464.

18. In the *Book of Elucidations* (*Kitab al-Talwīhat*) ed. *ibid.*, p. 108, # 83.

19. See *En Islam iranien*, II, Bk. II, Ch. III.

20. For the context of this theme, see our *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī* (supra, n. 11), pp. 169-173 and p. 346, n. 70. See also *En Islam iranien*, III, Bk. V. Ch. I, "Confessions extatiques de Mīr Dāmād."

21. See *Avicenna*, Pt. I, p. 157 ff., and M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 411-415.

22. H. Leisegang, *La Gnose*, trans. J. Gouillard (Paris, 1951), p. 249.

23. Both the Arabic text and the paraphrase in Persian were published in vol. II of our *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques* of Shihaboddin Yahya Sohravardī, Bibliothèque Iranienne, II (Teheran-Paris, 1952); see the *Prolegomènes* in French at the beginning of the book, p. 85 ff., and *En Islam iranien, II, Bk. II, Ch. VI.* We have published a translation into French of the whole cycle of Sohravardī's mystical recitals under the title *L'archange empourpré*, Documents spirituels, 14 (Paris: Fayard, 1976).

24. The text entitled *Khawd al-Hayāh* (The Cistern of the Water of Life), *la version arabe de l'Amrtakunda*, was published by Yusuf Hosayn in the *Journal asiatique* 213 (1928): 291-344. There is also an unpublished version of it in Persian. Regarding the attribution to Avicenna, see G. C. Anawati, *Essai de bibliographie avicennienne* (Cairo, 1950), p. 254, no. 197.

For further details on the content of this brief Irano-Indian spiritual romance, parts of which already exist in Sohravardī and which clear titling of the mss makes it impossible to attribute to Avicenna, see our study *Pour une morphologie de la spiritualité shī'ite*, *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XXIX (Zurich, 1961), Ch. V. and *En Islam iranien*, II, Bk. II, Ch. VI, 5.

25. The formula 1 x 1 is also given by Rūzbehān as that of the esoteric *tawīd*. See our study on the Sufism of Rūzbehān Baqlī of Shirāz in *En Islam iranien*, III, Bk. III, Ch. VI, 6.

26. *Poimandres*, §§ 2-4, 7-8: *Corpus Hermeticum* (ed. A. D. Nock, trans, A. J. Festugière) I (Paris, 1945): 7 and 9.

27. Martin Dibelius, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, (Tübingen, 1923), p. 491. Greek text ed. Molly Whittaker, *Die apostolischen Väter*, I (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956): 22, *Visio* V, 1 ff.

28. See the psychological commentary of M.-L. von Franz, *Die Passio Perpetuae*, following C. G. Jung, *Aion, Untersuchungen zur Symbolgeschichte* (Zurich, 1951), pp. 436-438. On *Christos-Angelos* see Martin Werner, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas*, 2nd ed. (Bern, 1953), pp. 322-388.

29. *Fravarti* is the original form of the word, which, due to an erroneous association with a similar term, was traditionally spelt *Fravashi* (in modern Persian, *farvahar*, *foruhar*).

30. For what follows, see our two studies in which references to the original texts are given: *Le Temps cyclique dans le mazdeisme et dans l'Ismaelisme*, *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XX (Zurich, 1952: 169 ff. (cited hereafter as *Temps cyclique*) and our book *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, trans. from the French by Nancy Pearson, Bollingen Series, XCI:2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977): 40 ff. (cited hereafter as *Spiritual Body*).

31. Regarding this question we could spell out the anthropology given in the *Bundahishn* (the Mazdean Book of the Creation), wherein man is said to be composed of five forces: body, soul, spirit, individuality, and guardian spirit (for the texts see H. S. Nyberg, *Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdeenes*, in *Journal asiatique* 214 (1929):232-233). This is, in short, the effort attempted by the dastur J. J. Modi, in *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*, 2nd ed. (Bombay, 1937), pp. 388-401. But his analysis of the "spiritual constitution of man" fails to give a satisfactory picture of the posthumous relation of the fravarti to the soul; what is more, it says nothing about the episode of the meeting with and recognition of *Daena*. So it seems that there is a defect in his schematization, and that the solution has to be thought out in another way.

32. See H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford,

1943), pp. 110-115 (texts of *Zatspram* 29:9 and *Datastan ī denik* 23:3). Of course, much more stress than is possible here should be placed on the data of the problem posed and the meaning of the solution proposed.

33. On this topography, see our *Spiritual Body*, p. 27 ff.

34. G. van der Leeuw, *Phanomenologie der Religion* § 16 (Tubingen, 1933), p. 125.

35. Nasîroddîn Tusi, *The Rawdatu't Taslîm commonly called Tasawwurat*, Persian text ed. by W. Ivanow (Leiden-Bombay, 1950), pp. 44, 65, 70; see our *Temps cyclique*, p. 210 ff., nn. 86, 89 and 100.

36. See also the theme of the heavenly *houri* in Nasîr Tusī, *Aghaz o anjam*, Ch. XIX, Publications of the University of Teheran, CCCI (Teheran, 1335 s.h.): 47-48.

37. E. S. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 54-55.

38. See Henri-Charles Puech, *Le Manicheisme, son fondateur, sa doctrine* (Paris, 1949), pp. 43-44; and our *En Islam iranien*, II, Bk. II, Ch. VI, 4.

39. *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, Pt. II, ed. C.R.C. Allberry (Stuttgart, 1938): 42, l. 22.

40. See principally the texts collected by Georgio Widengren, *The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God* (Uppsala, 1945), pp. 17 ff., 25 ff., 33 ff.; Hans Söderberg, *La Religion des Cathares* (Uppsala, 1949), pp. 174 ff., 211 ff., 247 ff.

41. See *En Islam Iranien*, II, Bk. II, Ch. VI, 4; and Widengren, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20. Particularly relevant are the homologies among the triads issuing from each of the five "Fathers" or fundamental archetypes (*Kephalaia*, Ch. VII, pp. 34-36). It is the image of light (homologue of the Virgin of Light) that "evokes" the three Angels or deities coming to meet one of the Elect at the moment of death. A far lengthier study than is possible here could be made concerning the Gnostic theme of the Angel as the heavenly *Alter Ego* and savior. Note the correspondence between the Gnostic terms ψυχαγωγος, ψυχοπομπός, 'οδηγος, 'ηγεμών (*rector*) and the fundamental Iranian term designating the function of the savior and guide of the soul: *parvānak* (in Mandean, *parwanka*; Widengren, *op. cit.*, p. 79 ff.). In modern Persian: *parwardan*, to nourish, to educate; *parwā kardan*, to take care of.

42. Philo, *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat*, English trans. by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whittaker, II, *The Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950): 216-219.

43. Namely *Svetasvatara-Upanishad* and *Kathaka-Upanishad*, cit. by Fritz Meier, in the great work quoted below in note 64.

III. MIDNIGHT SUN AND CELESTIAL POLE

44. For the "Earth of seven keshvars," the cartographic process, and the references to the texts, see our *Spiritual Body*, pp. 17-24.

45. For the texts, see *ibid.*, pp. 32-36.

46. *Ibid.*, p 73 ff., 84 ff.; See our *Prolegomènes II aux oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques de Sohravardī* (*supra* n. 23), pp. 39-55, concerning the structure of the pleroma of Lights, and p. 85 ff. on the connection between the *Recital of the Occidental Exile* and the Avicennan *Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. We also intend to publish shortly a translation of Sohravardī's great book *Hikmat al Ishraq* (the "oriental" theosophy), together with the Glosses of Molla Sadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1640), the latter being equal in importance to an original work (see our ed. and

trans. of the *Livre des pénetrations metaphysiques* (*Kitab al-Mashā'ir*), Bibl. Iranienne, X (Teheran-Paris, 1964), Intr., p. 40.

47. As Mohsen Fayz (an Iranian Shi'ite theologian of the seventeenth century) repeats; See our *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, p. 351 f. See the translation of this text in our *Spiritual Body*, pp. 176-179 ff.

48. In no. 83 of the "*Book of Elucidations*" (above n. 18), a text of the highest importance.

49. See our *Introduction* to the great work of Ruzbehan, *Le Jasmin des Fideles d'amour*, Bibliotheque Iranienne, VIII, Persian text published in collaboration with Moh. Mo'in and trans. of the first ch. (Teheran-Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1958), p. 37 ff. See also *En Islam iranien*, III, Bk. III, Ch. II.

50. *Banat Na'sh*, the constellation of the Bear (Ursa Major and Ursa Minor).

51. Compare the text used as an epigraph by an alchemist of the seventeenth century in his edition of Nicholas Flamel: *Et videbant lapidem stanneum in manu Zorobabel. Septem isti oculi sunt Domini, qui discurrunt in universam terram* (cit. by C. G. Jung, *Der Geist der Psychologie*, in *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XIV) (1947: 436-437). One cannot help relating the theme of the seven *Abdāl* (who nightly traverse the world to inform the pole) to the text of Zechariah, "Those seven are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (4:10), or again " . . . the stone that I have laid before Joshua, upon one stone shall be seven eyes" (Zech. 3:9).

52. For the context of this doctrine in Ruzbehan, see *En Islam iranien*, III, Bk. III, Ch. III. It contains the Shi'ite of Walayat and the current Sufi idea of *Wilāyat*. There will be further occasion below (*infra* VI, 2) to recall why the frequent translation of the one or the other word by "sanctity" and of *walī* (plural *Awliyā*) by "saint" is inadequate. The term *Initiation* seems to recapitulate best the implications of the word *walāyat*. In Twelve-Imām Shī'ite gnosis, the "cycle of Initiation" (*dā'irat al-walāyat*) dominated by imāmology succeeds the cycles of prophecy which were completed with the "Seal of the Prophets." On the development of this theme in Lahījī (the work cited below in note 118) and on the relationship suggested with Goethe's poem and "the Friend of God of Oberland," see our work *En Islam iranien*, IV, Bk. VII, Ch. III.

53. For the text of this tradition, see *op. cit.* III, Bk. III, Ch. III. There are numerous variations in the enumeration and classification of these mystical hierarchies.

54. J. C. Coyajee, *Cults and Legends of Ancient Iran and China* (Bombay, 1936), pp. 161-183.

55. *Yazata* (Persian *Izad*) literally: "adorable." When, in conformity with post-Islamic tradition, the equivalent given for it is the notion of *Angel* (Persian *fereshta*), what must be remembered are not so much the angels of the Bible as the *Dii-Angeli* of Proclus.

56. See the diagram set up by J. C. Coyajee, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

57. Drower, *op. cit.* (*supra* n. 37), pp. 9, 56, 325. It seems fitting to mention here the form of worship practiced by an ideal sect of philosophers, referred to in the Encyclopedia of the *Ikhwān al Safā* (the "Brethren with pure hearts"). These philosophers appear to be at once Sabeans permeated by Neoplatonism and, as it were, pre-Ismaelian theosophers. In the course of each month they celebrate three holy nights corresponding to the phases of the Moon (the first night, the mid-month night, and lastly the night between the twenty-fifth day of the month and the first day of the following month). The ritual on each

night is divided into three periods: the first third is devoted to meditation in one's private oratory; the second third to meditation on the "cosmic scripture" under the sky, turning one's face toward the *pole Star*. The last period is devoted to chanting from a philosophical hymnology (the "prayer of Plato," the "prayer of Idris-Hermes," the "secret psalm of Aristotle," etc.). The choice of the *pole Star* as *qibla* (the axis of orientation of the prayer) seems to point to the Sabeism of these Sages; their calendar confirms this impression. See also *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safa* IV (Cairo, 1928): 303-304, and for further details our study *Rituel sabéen et exégèse ismaelienne du rituel*, *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XIX/1950 (1951): 209 ff.

58. See *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, pp. 46-53 ("The Pilgrim to the Orient"), and p. 306 n. 37.

59. This treatise of 'Alī Hamadānī has been studied by Fritz Meier, *Die Welt der Urbilder bei 'Alī Hamadānī*, *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XVIII (1950): 115-172; see particularly p. 167. Fritz Meier quotes (p. 92 of the work cited below n. 64) a treatise also by 'Alī Hamadānī entitled *Hashrio al-ruhānīya wa-maghrib al-jismanīya:* the *Orient* of spiritual realities and the *Occident* of material realities.

60. See our *Avicenna*, Pt. I, p. 137 ff., particularly § 3, 10, 21 and 22; Pt. II, p. 319 ff.

IV. VISIO SMARAGDINA

61. It is the brief anonymous treatise studied more than a century ago (*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. 16 [Leipzig, 1862]: 235-241) by Fleischer, *Ueber die farbigen Lichterscheinungen der Sufi's*, according to the Leipzig Ms. 187: *De variis luminibus singulorum graduum Suficorum propriis.*

62. See our edition of *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* (*Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques de Sohravardī*, II, *supra* n. 23, § 272). In this work, fifteen categories of photisms which mystics can experience are described and the author's conclusion is that "all this pertains to the laws of the *eighth* climate, where the marvelous cities Jabalqa, Jabarsa, and Hūrqalyā are to be found."

63. See Gerda Walther, *Phänomenologie der Mystik* (Olten, 1955), pp. 68-71 and 151-155, and our analytical review of this work in the *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (January-March 1958), pp. 92-101. See also Mircea Eliade's valuable study, *Significations de la "lumière intérieure"*; *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XXVI (1958): pp. 189-242. Victor Zuckerkandl's substantial work, *Sound and Symbol* (New York, 1956), also contains original phenomenological observations of the "intentions" of color (p. 61 ff.). There are cross-references in all these studies which have a bearing on our purpose. Not being able to go into them further here, we shall have to return to them at some other time.

64. All the parenthetical references in the text of the present chapter refer to the excellent edition by Fritz Meier, *Die Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa-fawātih al-jalāl des Najm ad-dīn al-Kubrā*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission, IX (Wiesbaden, 1957). This valuable edition, together with a German commentary, is a major contribution to the studies of Sufism. We have a slight reservation as to the form of the title adopted by the editor in contrast to that of the majority of the manuscripts. We also would prefer: *Fawatih al-jamāl* . . . and thus take it to mean: *The blossoms of Beauty and the perfumes of Majesty*, which means that without the blossoming of Beauty as theophany man could not approach the sublimity of the *Deus absconditus*. Concerning these two categories of attributes see again *infra* V,

2. The aspects of *Freundlichkeit* and *Erhabenheit* derive respectively from the two fundamental Attributes, but it seems to us essential to preserve their primary meaning (without which all the texts relating to beauty as theophany in Ruzbehan and Ibn 'Arabī would be incomprehensible). We can give here only the briefest glimpse of Najm Kobra's biography. Born in 540/1145, he spent the first part of his life in long journeys (Nishapur, Hamadan, Ispahan, Mecca, Alexandria) in the course of which he acquired his spiritual training. But the traditions concerning the order and itinerary of his travels diverge to the point that they are difficult to reconstruct with perfect coherence. He returned to Xwarezm in about 580/1184. From then on, all his activity took place in Central Asia, where he had a throng of followers, several of whom bear illustrious names. There is some evidence to indicate that he recognized only twelve great disciples as such (see *infra* n. 109). Traditions relate his heroic death during the horrible siege of Xwārezm by the Mongols in 617/1220-1221. We ourselves devoted an entire course at the Ecole des Hautes-Etudes (1958-1959) to the important treatise by Najm Kobra made accessible to us in Fritz Meier's edition. Here it has only been possible to indicate its principal themes. See *Annuaire de la Section des Sciences Religieuses*, Ecole pratique des Hautes-Etudes, 1959-1960, p. 75 ff. As for the bipolarity of the divine attributes *Jamāl* and *Jalal*, there is an exact equivalence in Kabbalah, see Gershom G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (London, 1960), p. 79 ff.

65. Concerning this term, see our *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, pp.153, 179 ff., 187 ff., where the need for this neologism is explained.

66. On the three aspects of *nafs* (the soul) see *infra* §3. Taken by itself the word *nafs* expands beyond our current notion of soul. In its higher aspect, the soul is the heart (Arabic *qalb*, Persian *del*, German *Gemüt*). In its intermediate aspect, it is the intellect (*'aql*), consciousness. In the present context, it designates the lower psyche.

67. Among many other examples (it may also be recalled here how Zarathustra put Ahriman to flight by reciting the *Ahunavairya*, see *Vendidād* XIX), Fritz Meier recalls (*op. cit.*, p. 162) an episode that figures in the Slavic version of the *Vita Adae et Evae*: when the Devil tries to lure Eve away from the Tigris by his talk, Eve does not utter a single word in reply.

68. On the mystical exegesis of this verse from he Qorān see our *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, p. 132.

69. A perfectly polished mirror (*speculum*) in which the image that is reflected is both what sees and what is seen: it is the *leitmotif* of all *speculative* mysticism attempting to express the "duality" of the *unus-ambo*, the secret of the heavenly *alter ego*, from the finale of the *Song of the Pearl* to the motif of the *shaykh al-ghayb* in the present treatise.

70. See the text of the *Risālat al-insān al-kāmil* (Treatise on the perfect man) of 'Alī Hamadānī (*supra* n. 59), given by Fritz Meier, *op. cit. Anhang*, p. 283, no. 5.

71. *Himma*. Concerning this notion, see our *Sufism of Ibn'Arabī*, p. 222 ff.

72. As an illustration of the same theme, we should cite a remarkable case of "synchronicity" between one of Najm Kobra's dreams and a dream of his own shaykh, 'Ammar Badlīsī: "I was in my retreat and behold, I experienced ecstasy (lit., "I went away," as the author always says in such cases). I was raised to the heights and behold, there was a rising sun before me. I was led into this sun,

after having experienced the tremendous intensity of its energies. Later I questioned the shaykh ('Ammar) about this. He said to me: 'Glory be to God! I myself had the following vision in a dream: I seemed to be strolling in the sacred territory of Mecca. You were with me and the sun was in the middle of the Sky. Then you said to me: O shaykh! Do you know who I am? I said: Who are you? You said: *I am that sun in the Sky*. Then my shaykh rejoiced that our two visions had synchronized. He said: 'I was ushered into the world of the heart. I carried on the battle for God night after night. I observed the Sky attentively until it entered into my inner world, and I experienced that *I am the Sky*. And I observed the Sky throughout other nights until I saw it below me, just as I had seen it above me. And I observed the Earth night after night, and I sought to discover it as it is, until it was engulfed in an orb of light (§58)."

73. Concerning this extremely important comparison see Fritz Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 79, and Carl Schmidt, *Koptisch-gnostische Schriften* I (Berlin, 1954): *Das erste Buch des Jeu*, Ch. 39, p. 294; *Das zweite Buch des Jeu*, Ch. 42, p. 303.

74. In the *Risalat al-sa'ir* (F. Meier, p. 201, n. 5) Najm Kobrā recommends adding from time to time the second part: "And Mohammad is God's Messenger." We should take into account, on this point, the increasing complexity of the formula in certain Shi'ite circles; the Imām is mentioned as the *wali Allāh*, "Friend of God," "initiator," even Fatima as "Light of God." Generally speaking, Shi'ite doctrine and practice include a triple *shahadat*: 1) attestation of the Divine Unity; 2) attestation of the prohetic mission; 3) attestation of the *Walāyat* of the Imams.

75. See Herzog, *Realencyklopadie fur protestantische Theologie und Kirche* 3rd ed., XVI, 251, l. 49 ff.; E. Tisserant, *Ascension d'Isaïe* (Paris, 1909), p. 211, note on 11:34 (reminiscence of the *Revelation of Elijah* in St. Paul, according to Origen; reminiscence of Isaiah, according to St. Jerome: *Ascensio enim Isaiae et Apocalypsis Eliae hoc habent testimonium*).

76. Najm Kobrā's *Risālat ila'l-ha'im*, quoted by F. Meier, *Anhang*, p. 295, no. 20.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 202; L. Massignon, *L'idée de l'esprit dans l'Islam, Eranos-Jahrbuch* XIII/1945: 279 (the Taoist influence was pointed out by H. Maspero; see also *supra* III, 3, concerning another possible Taoist influence).

78. F. Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 204; Rudolf Otto, *Sünde und Urschuld* (Munich, 1932), p. 140 ff.

79. The *himma*: see *supra* n. 71.

80. Majdoddīn Baghdadī (quoted by F. Meier, p. 244), in his *Tohfat al-barara*, also mentions a shaykh's saying, wherein the green color is characterized as the last veil of the soul. On the pre-eminence of this color in Semnānī, see *infra* VI, 1.

81. "Know that four angels raise the mystic towards this mystic station—the Abode of the lordly condition and of power: one on his right, one on his left, one above him, one below him . . ." (§19). On this quaternity representing a symbolism of the center, see our commentary on the "Confessions extatiques de Mir Damad" (*supra* n. 20); a similar angelic tetrad figures in the *Summum Bonum* of Robert Fludd, 1629 ed. "Usually the Angels come from behind. Sometimes they come from above. The same for the *Sakīna*: this is a group of Angels who descend into the heart; their advent brings an experience of quiet and peacefulness into the heart. They transport you out of yourself so wholly that you have no longer any freedom to move or speak, no possibility of thinking of anything other than the divine Being" (§21). "An Angel carried me away.

He came up behind me, took me in his arms and carried me off; then he turned toward my face and gave me a kiss. His light sparkled in my inner view. Then he said: In the name of God, than whom there is no other, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Then he rose up with me a little higher. Then he set me down again" (§23).

82. Concerning the seven Heavens, see Qoran 67:3 and 78:12; concerning the seven Earths, *Safīnat Bihar al-Anwar*, I, 661. For an amplification of this theme in the Shaykhite School, see our *Spiritual Body*, p. 302, n. 86.

83. This is the general theme of our book, *Spiritual Body*, referred to in the previous note; see also *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, p. 350, n. 10.

84. Compare the text of the *Risalat ilal-ha'im*, quoted by F. Meier, p. 97, n. 2.

85. The same theme is fundamental in Sohravardī and his great commentator, Molla Sadra Shirazī: spiritual realities must be observed in a proper manner, just as material realities call for an appropriate method of observation.

86. See §§44 and 70. Attention should be drawn here to an important treatise by one of the masters of the Iranian Shaykhi school of the last century, Shaykh Mohammad Karīm Khan Kermanī, on the color red: the optical phenomenon, its essence and nature, its symbolic and mystical meanings, etc. (*Risala-ye yaquta-ye hamra*). Compare this with the red light that is the dominant note in the visions of Ruzbehan: "One night I saw something enveloping the Heavens. It was a sparkling red light. I asked: What is that? He told me: It is the cloak of Magnificence." See *En Islam iranien*, III, Bk. III, Ch. IV.

87. So in each case we are told about a light projected by its corresponding organ, one of the subtle organs of the body of light, the visualization of which corresponds to the moment when these organs become independent of the physical body's sensory organ. "The light of hearing does not have a circular form: it consists only of two points of light which make their appearance behind the double circle of the two eyes" (§57). As in the case of the other senses, this "visualization" of the acoustic phenomenon will be observed in terms of suprasensory physiology. The "physiology of the man of light," according to Semnanī, is established on a basis common to all the senses, but develops quite differently in each case.

88. On this correspondence, see F. Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 67, n.1; Paul Kraus, *Jābir ibn Hayyān*, II (Cairo, 1942), index; our own study on *Le "Livre du Glorieux" de Jābir ibn Hayyān*, *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, XVIII (1950): 75 ff.; Ps. Majrītī (*supra* n. 8), *Das Ziel des Weisen*, p. 46.

89. This is one of the well-known "outrageous sayings" of the great Iranian mystic, Abu Yazid Bastamī (d. 261/875), in our edition of Rūzbehān Baqlī-Shīrazī, *Commentaire sur les paradoxes des soufis* (*Sharh-e Shathīyāt*), Persian text with French introduction, Bibl. Iranienne, XII (Teheran-Paris, 1966).

90. Considerable research remains to be done on the various ways of naming this figure in the school of Najm Kobrā. The *shaykh al-ghayb* appears again in 'Azīz Nasafī, see the text *Tanzīl al-arwāh*, quoted by F. Meier, p. 188, n. 1, and *Anhang*, pp. 293-294, no. 18. In *Semnanī* (*infra*, VI, 1) it is called *ustād ghaybī*.

91. See the text of the *Risālat ilā'l-hā'im* quoted by F. Meier, pp. 185-186 and *Anhang*, p. 293, no. 17.

92. On this idea of the *shahid*, according to Rūzbehān, see our work *En Islam iranien*, III, Bk. III, Ch. III, V, VI-6.

93. 'Aynal-Qozāt Hamadanī (d. 525/1131), Ahmad Ghazālī's favorite disciple (and who, like Sohravardī, died a martyr's death), relates an analogous

vision in his book, the *Tamhīdāt:* "At this mystic station," he said, "I saw a light emanating from the divine being, and simultaneously I saw a light rising from myself. The two lights met and blended together, and there appeared a form of such beauty that for some time I remained dazzled thereby" (cit. F. Meier, p. 114, n. 1). It is significant that 'Aynal-Qozat ends this personal recollection by an allusion to the well-known *hadīth* of the vision, where the Prophet declares: "I saw my God in the most beautiful of forms." See our *Sufism of Ibn' Arabī*, p. 272 ff.

94. *Ghibto*: As we have already pointed out, this is the technical term by which Najm Kobrā refers to each of his visionary experiences: "departures" from the sensory world; "entrances" into the suprasensory world.

95. These Qoranic verses refer to the episode of Moses being rescued from the waters. The way in which the verses are repeated in isolated fragments is in accordance, of course, with the visionary's intention. Ruzbehan also gives us to understand that the words "I shed on thee love from Me" characterize celestial love: the exegesis of this verse is to be found in the fact that Majnun has become a "mirror of God," because his being has become the pure substance of love (*Jasmin*, §270 *in fine*). Besides, the passage contains another *leitmotiv* important in Najm Kobra, that of the "suprasensory books" written by God in Heaven. Najm knows several of their titles; one may be able to read them (just like the Qoranic verses quoted here) in the lines and figures outlined by the stars in the Heavens of the soul (§71-72). F. Meier (pp. 134-135) reminds us in this connection of the case of Justinus Kerner's Seeress of Prevorst.

96. This Persian word designates the violet (flower and color). Concerning this other important theme of the esoteric names, or heavenly names, borne by certain beings, see F. Meier, pp. 135-136.

97. See *En Islam iranien*, III, Bk. III, Ch. VI, 7, and my *Introduction* to *Jasmin* (*supra* n. 49) and the translation of the first chapter of that book.

98. *Dīwan d'al-Hallāj*, ed. Louis Massignon in *Journal asiatique* 218 (1931), no. 30. The text given by Najm Kobra has some variants, see F. Meier, p. 39 of the Arabic text.

99. *Dīwan*, *ibid*. no. 57. See our edition of the *Jasmin*, *Gloss*. 95, p. 170. The two lines are sometimes attributed to Hallāj, sometimes to Majnūn, sometimes quoted anonymously as they are by Ruzbehan's commentator: "When the mystic reaches perfection in love," he says, "the two modes of being become one whole in him. Then he cries out: 'I am the one whom I love and the one I love is I; we are two spirits immanent in one body.'" That these lines may have been addressed to an earthly person, as Sarrāj testifies, no more than bears out, far from contradicting it, the theophanic idea of love, see *En Islam iranien* III, Bk. III, Ch. VI, 7.

100. The great mystic, fiery soul, not to be confused with his brother, the theologian, Abu Hamid Ghazalī. The Persian text *Sawanih* by Ahmad-e Ghazali (d. 520/1126) (*Aphorismen über die Liebe*) was edited by Hellmut Ritter, in *Bibliotheca Islamica*, 15 (Istambul-Leipzig, 1942). We have made a translation of it, as yet unpublished.

101. The analogy with the Mazdean idea makes itself felt in context, especially in certain interpretations which Najm Kobra gives of Bakharzī's visions. See the passage in the latter's *Waqā'i al-khalwat*, quoted by F. Meier, p. 186 and *Anhang*, p. 292, no. 16: "At that moment the force of the individuality (*qowwat al-'ayn*) is revealed, that is called the *suprasensory sun*, and which is the *scales* for weighing actions and thoughts. A man can recognize by means of these scales

whether his inner state shows an excess or a deficit, whether he is safe and sound or in danger of perishing, whether he is on the right path or has strayed, whether he is faithful or unfaithful and dissolute, whether his heart is dilated or distressed, whether his goal is near or is still far off, whether he is rejected or accepted, whether he is making progress or is standing still. In short, he can discriminate between light and darkness."

101a. We are referring to the symbolic recital developed by Nasīr Tusı at the end of one of his books in Persian (*Koshayesh-Nameh*, unpublished).

102. See references above in note 92.

103. *Ibid.*; the whole of Rūzbehan's book, *The Jessamine of the Faithful in Love* (*supra* n. 49), forms a setting for this theme, of which only the bare outline can be given here.

104. Ibn 'Arabī, *Kitāb al-Fotūhāt al Makkīya*, Ch. 360; Cairo edition, 1329, Vol. III, p. 274 ff.

105. Further to n. 101 above, one will recall here the connection in Christian iconography between the symbol or attribute of the *scales* and the Archangel Michael (whose liturgical feast, September 29, also comes under the zodiacal sign Libra). This weighing of the souls was what led the Zoroastrian scholar, J. J. Modi, to make a comparative study of the figure of the Archangel Michael and that of Mithra in Zoroastrianism: *St. Michael of the Christians and Mithra of the Zoroastrians. A comparison* (*Journal of the Anthrop. Soc. of Bombay*, Vol. VI, pp. 237-254).

106. All these connections have been admirably indicated in a little book with which we do not entirely agree on all points but towards which we feel sympathetic because it is one of the rare treatises on angelology written in our time and because it is for the most part inspired by heartfelt daring: Eugenio d'Ors, *Introducción a la vida angélica, cartas a una soledad* (Buenos Aires, 1941), especially pp. 37-40 and 62-63.

V. THE BLACK LIGHT

107. This is a corollary of the theme of the knowledge of like by like; in Ruzbehan as well as 'Ibn Arabī, a fundamental theme is that the theophanies of the Names and Attributes always and essentially correspond with the spiritual state of the one to whom they are revealed.

108. See the excellent article by Jean-Louis Destouches, *L'ombre et la lumière en physique,* in the volume *Ombre et Lumiere,* publ. by the Academie septentrionale (Paris, 1961), pp. 15-20.

108a. Here it is fitting also to bring to mind the correlation between the acts of light or of illumination (*ishrāqāt*) and the acts of contemplation (*moshāhadāt*) in the cosmogony of Sohravardı.

109. Najmoddın 'Abdollah ibn Mohammad ibn Shāhāwar Asadī Rāzī, known as Dāyeh (d. 654/1256), one of the twelve great disciples whom, according to one tradition, Najm Kobrā accepted as such by name (see the writings of Hosayn Xwārezmī, quoted by F. Meier, p. 44, n. 1); he lived later in Hamadān; at the time of the Mongol invasion he retreated to Ardabīl (the cradle of the Safavid dynasty, on the present Russo-Iranian frontier, west of the Caspian Sea), then in Asia Minor; he was in contact with Sadroddīn Qonyawī and Jalāl Rumī's circle. Buried in Baghdād. His chief work as a mystic, besides a Qoranic commentary, is quoted below.

110. Chapters XVIII and XIX of the *Mirsād al-'Ibad*, publ. by Shamsol-'Orafa (Teheran, 1312 s.h. [= 1352 l.h. = 1933 A.D.]), pp. 165-173.

111. Concerning these two categories of divine attributes, see above n. 64, remarks concerning the title of Najm Kobra's treatise.

112. There is an important theological distinction between the two ideas of *Islām* and *īmān*, the second being the perfection of the first. In Shi'ite theology *īman*, faith (as in fidelity and confidence), implies the adherence of the heart to the person of the holy *Imams* as *Awliya*, the initiators to the hidden meaning of the prophetic revelations; total faith in the Shi'ite sense presupposes the threefold *shahadāt* (above, note 74).

113. *Walī-e motlaq*. In Shi'ite terminology *walāyat* is the prerogative of the Imamate, the charisma of the Imam as *walī*, including the Imam of our day who is hidden and invisible (see *supra* III, 2 and 3, and *infra* VI, 2). It is impossible to discuss here the relationships between Shī'ite terminology and that of Sufism as such, nor the Shi'ite presuppositions, at least latent, in every theosophy where the idea of *walāyat* enters. Naturally the Shi'ite Sufis hold a precise opinion on this point and on the extensive use of the term *Awliyā*. Here we note the emphasis on the symbols of the sun and moon, which in general symbolism figure respectively the masculine and feminine. In Ismaelian Shi'ite gnosis (where the expression *dā'i-e motlaq* is somewhat reminding of the expression in question here), the Imam as initiator to the hidden meaning, dispensator of the "light of the *walayat*," is represented as "spiritual mother of the adepts." Fatima, the daughter of the prophet and the mother of the holy Imams, is the "confluent of the two lights," that of prophecy and that of initiation. In Twelve-Imam Shī'ite gnosis, the solar *walayat* is that of the Imām, the lunar *walāyat* that of the adepts (Lahījī, *op. cit. infra* n. 118, pp. 316-317), see *En Islam iranien* I, Bk. I, Ch. VI, 2 and IV, Bk. VII, Ch. I, 3.

114. See ref. *supra* note 47.

115. See refs. *supra* note 92.

116. What is in question here are the planes or universes of a transcendental cosmography, while the 18,000 worlds in Ismaelian gnosis, denote universes following one another from a cycle of epiphany (*dawr al-kashf*) to a cycle of occultation (*dawr al-satr*), or from one religion to another, one civilization to another. Each of these forms a separate universe, and only by speaking of one in particular can one say that it had a beginning (see Nasır Tusı, *Tasawworāt*, p. 48 of the Persian text). The figure 360,000 refers to a mega cycle (*Kawr*, Α'ιών) and concurrently to the 360 degrees of the Sphere; see in Ruzbehan the figure 360 refers to the number of Initiates who from one period to another are the "eyes" through which God looks at the world. As for the figure 70, see *En Islam iranien*, III, Bk. III, Ch. III. On the theme of 18,000 worlds in Kabbalah, see Gershom Scholem, *Les Origines de la Kabbale*, pp. 476, 490.

117. Mahmūd Shabestarī, great mystic shaykh of Azerbaijan, lived principally at Tabrīz and died in 720/1320, at the age of 33, in Shabestar, where his tomb still exists. His great poem was motivated by the questions of Mīr Hosaynī Sadat Harawī. It is significant that both of these men were regarded by the Ismaelians as having been of their persuasion; see our edition of an unfinished Ismaelian commentary on *Golshan-e Rāz*, published in our *Trilogie ismaelienne*, Bibl, Iranienne, IX, Teheran-Paris, 1961, Ismaelism having survived in Iran under the *khirqa* (the cloak) of Sufism, or if one prefers, Sufism having taken on certain aspects of a crypto-Ismaelism.

118. This commentary, re-edited several times in Iran, has again been the object of a recent edition under the care of Mr. Kayvān Samī'ī, *Mafatih al-i'jaz* (Teheran, 1957), in a beautiful volume of 96 + 804 pages. Shamsoddīn

Mohammad Gılanī Lahījī, native of the region to the southwest of the Caspian Sea, was an eminent shaykh of the Nūrbakhshīyah Order; he was even one of the successors of Sayyed Nurbakhsh as head of the Order. He died and was buried at Shīraz in 912/1506-07. Numerous pages of this commentary are to be found translated in our *Trilogie ismaelienne*.

119. Qazī Nurollah Shoshtarī is one of the great figures of Shī'ism in the Safavid period (his lineage was traced back to the fourth Shi'ite Imam 'Alī Zaynol-'Ābidīn). He died a martyr in India, by the order of Jahangīr, in 1019/1610. See our *Introduction* to the *Jasmin* of Rūzbehan, p. 73, n. 124. In his great collection of biographies, *Majālis al-Mu'minīn*, he gives valuable information about our author.

120. Shah Esma'īl (born 892/1487, died 930/1524, great-grandson through his mother of Kalo Joannes Comnenus, last Christian emperor of Trebizond) was, as we know, the restorer of Iranian national unity some nine hundred years after the collapse of the Sassanids before the armies of Islam. It was he who made Twelve-Imam Shi'ism the national religion of Iran. He was only fourteen at the time of his coronation in Tabriz (905/1500); the night before the ceremony, some of those close to him, and even some Shi'ite theologians, warned him against the danger of formulating the Shi'ite profession of faith in a city the great majority of whose inhabitants were Sunnites. To this the adolescent answered: "I am committed to this action; God and the Immaculate Imams are with me, and I fear no one" (see E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, IV, p. 53).

121. *Kabūd-pushan*, the "blue-clothed," is a current Persian way of naming Sufis, referring to their custom of wearing blue clothing; various explanations have been given of this practice. Here it has a precise meaning, being in accord with a general symbolism of the color of clothing. Thus the meaning of the color blue (in Najm Kobrā as in Semnānī) makes blue clothing appropriate to those who are still in the first stages of the mystic life. For that very reason one can understand the malicious humor of Hafez with regard to those of the Sufis who made a regular habit of wearing clothing of that color: were they to be taken as people who never got beyond the first stages of the mystic life? On the other hand, when the great mystic poet of Shīraz describes the status of his master as "rose-colored" (*Pīr-e Golrang*) as opposed to the wearers of blue, he was alluding to this custom of changing the "liturgical" color of personal clothing to accord with progress on the spiritual path. See our *Introduction* to *Jasmin* of Rūzbehān, pp. 56-62 (where exactly the clue to the identity of the *Pīr-e Golrang* perhaps allows us to connect Hafez to the *tarīquat* of Rūzbehān of Shīraz, in it are also recalled several essential ideas in the symbolism of Hafez which has been so unfortunately misunderstood in the West by simply forgetting how and why his Dīwān could have been used as a Bible by the Iranian Sufis until our day). This practice is expressly attested to by Najm Kobrā, who distinguishes two categories of the color blue: *kabūd* (deep blue) and *azraq* (sky blue, azure), see the passage from his *Adāb al-Morīdīn* quoted by F. Meier, p. 126, n. 7: black and blue (*siyāh o kabūd*) colored clothing are to be worn when, thanks to the spiritual warfare, the lower psyche (*nafs ammara*) has been overcome, as though one were in mourning for it. The meaning is therefore not the same as in the case of Lahījī; here black does not refer to the higher stage where one speaks of "black light." In a higher spiritual Abode where the mystic gains access to the translunar worlds by concentration of his spiritual energy (*himmat*), Najm Kobrā connects this with the wearing of azure colored clothing. In every case we must take into account the symbolic scale of the colors, but

they can vary, as we have seen here, from one master to another. In Semnanī the highest color is the color green.

122. This is the poem of Mulla Bana quoted by Mr. Kayvan Samī, p. 95 of his introduction to the *Golshan-e Raz* (*supra* n. 118). Other works referred to therein show how visions of colored lights have never ceased to interest the Iranians.

123. Pp. 94-102 of the commentary in the edition referred to, which we shall now analyze without particular references; couplets 123-129 (not mentioned in this edition) of the *Rose Garden of Mystery*.

124. See the second of the "Ecstatic Confessions" of Mīr Dāmād, *En Islam iranien*, IV, Bk. V, Ch. 1, 4.

125. Sayyed Ahmad 'Alawī, pupil and son-in-law of Mīr Dāmād, see our *Avicenna*, pp. 58-60.

126. Literally, "the black color of the aspect"; this statement can be related to the fact that Lāhījī habitually wore black clothing, this being the outward sign of the metaphysical poverty which is the greatest of riches for the being essentialized by the divine being of the Godhead. The theme of "black light" reminds us here of the paradoxical form in which one of the most ancient Shī'ite gnostics, Hishām ibn Sālim Jawalīqī, propounded his doctrine: God has human form and a body, a subtle body, not composed of flesh and blood, but of sparkling, radiant light. Like the human being, He has five senses, but they are subtle organs. He has abundant black hair which is *black light* (*nūr aswad*). See the context in our *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, p. 381 f., n. 12.

127. *Mashhad*: place of the presence of the *shāhid*, where the witness testifies to his presence and to the presence to which he is present (hence the place of testimony of the *martyrs*). Therefore it is the *shāhid* as place and form (*mazhar*) of theophany (*tajallī*): the being of perfect beauty chosen as witness of contemplation.

128. On the mystical context of this *hadīth*, see our *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, p. 272 ff.

129. For more details on the doctrines of Semnanī, see our work *En Islam iranien*, 2 III, Bk. IV, Ch. IV. In it can be found in detail all the references to the works of Semnanī, still in manuscript, in Persian and in Arabic; these references will not be repeated here.

130. Et. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 341-342.

131. See Miguel Asīn Palacios, *Obras escogidas I* (*Ibn Massarra y su escuela*) (Madrid, 1946), pp. 159-160, on the *Opus majus* of Roger Bacon and the spiritual interpretation of the Ishrāqīyūn. Concerning the science of perspective as the most fundamental of the sciences of Nature, see Raoul Carton, *L'experience physique chez Roger Bacon* (Paris, 1924), pp. 72-73, and *L'experience mystique de l'illumination interieure chez Roger Bacon* (Paris, 1924), pp. 214 ff. (the seven degrees of inner science), 265, 306 ff.

132. In fact the word *tafsīr* designates the literal exegesis centered around the canonical Islamic sciences. Although one generally refers to Semnānī's *Tafsīr*, it would be more appropriate to speak of his *Ta'wīl* (*ta'wīl*, etymologically, means "to reconduct," to lead something back to its origin, to its archetype). On the three degrees of hermeneutics: *tafsīr*, *ta'wīl*, and *tafhīm*, see *En Islam iranien*, index s.v.

133. In Islamic exegesis the word *Parakletos* is taken to be a deformation, by

the Christians, of the word *Peryklitos* (*laudatissimus* = Ahmad = Mohammad). The verses (14:16 and 28; 15:16) of St. John's Gospel would thus read as the announcement of the advent of the Seal of the Prophets. In Shī'ite gnosis, the Paraclete (*farāqlīt*) is identified with the Twelfth Imām (the hidden and awaited Imam) who will reveal the esoteric meaning of the Revelations; see our report on *L'idée du Paraclet en philosophie iranienne*, presented at the Congress on Iranology, Rome, Academy of the Lincei, April 1970, and published in *Atti del Convegno internazionale sul tema: La Persia nel Medioevo* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1971), pp. 37-68.

133a. This interpretation, in going to the very root, proceeds equally from a deep penetration of Islamic theology. It would be interesting to make a comparative study of the Pauline theme of κένωσις (Phillip. 2:6 ff.), the "*semetipsum exinanivit*" which was such a thorny problem for Lutheran theologians in the nineteenth century; see article by Loofs, *Kenosis*, in Herzog, *Realencycl. f. prot. Theol. und Kirche*, 3rd ed., X, 246-263.

134. On the three bodies of the human being: body of origin, earthly and perishable; body of acquisition or fruition; body of resurrection, and on the analogy with the "physics of resurrection" in the Shaykhis, see *En Islam iranien*, III, Bk. IV, Ch. Iv, 5.

135. On these observations concerning iconography, see our *Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, pp. 275 ff. and 379 ff., n. 7 to 12.

136. See Louis Massignon, "The Origins of the Transformation of Persian Iconography by Islamic Theology: the Shī'a School of Kufa and its Manichean Connexions" (in Arthur Upham Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art*, Vol. V, Pt. IX, Ch. 49 [Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1964-196], pp. 1928-1936, particularly pp. 1933-1936), who was the first to throw light on the role of Kufa at the origin of painting in Islam, and to show the value of the testimony of Abū Shakūr Salimī quoted below. The Iranian motif of the *Xvarnah* leads us however here to a different interpretation of the connection of this iconography with what the gold backgrounds of Byzantine iconography suggest.

137. See our *Introduction* to *Jasmin*, pp. 6 and 20.

138. This one, for example: "Raise up the *dhikr* of the Light, help the people of Light, guide the light toward the Light." See our *Prolégomènes I* to the Works of Sohravardī (supra n. 17), p. 45.

139. *Farbenlehre*, Kröners Taschenausgabe, Vol. 62: Schriften über die Natur geordnet und ausgewählt von Günther Ipsen (Stuttgart, 1949), *Einleitung*, p. 176. (We came across too late to be able to use it here a very interesting number of the review *Triades* III, 4, winter 1955, dedicated to "the spiritual experience of colors." The articles in this number offer striking correlations with the present research.)

140. *Ibid.*, §§ 1 to 3. Let us recall very briefly one of the simplest experiments described at the outset of Goethe's work. On a pure white sheet of paper place or draw a disc of uniform color, blue for example; concentrate your gaze fixedly and attentively on this disc. Soon the periphery begins to glow with a reddish-yellow light that is very brilliant but extremely delicate, so delicate that it is not always possible to give it a name. This iridescent light (physiological color) seems to be trying to "escape" from the colored disc (recall here the technique of Manichean painting). It succeeds and becomes a complete "orb of light" which, having become detached, seems to flutter on the white paper around the colored disc. If one abruptly removes the disc (assuming it to be a separate piece) one then perceives only the orb of this physiological color.

141. *Ibid.*, §805: "When the eye sees a color it is immediately activated and is fitted by nature to produce unconsciously, necessarily, another color, which, together with the given color, includes the totality of the circle of colors. A single color provokes in the eye, through a specific sensation, the effort toward generality." §806: "In order to become conscious of this totality and satisfy itself, it seeks at the side of each colored space a space without color in order to produce the color it requires." (See the example given above in note 140.) §807: "There exactly one finds the fundamental law of the whole harmony of colors, of which each one of us may become convinced through personal experience, by trying the experiments indicated in the section of this book devoted to *physiological colors*."

142. *Ibid.*, §§751-756. §753: "To experience perfectly these definite and meaningful effects, one must completely surround the eyes with a single color; one is, for example, in a room all of one color, or one looks through a colored glass; one is then oneself identified with the color; the color brings the eye and also the mind into unison." This may remind us of Nezamī's great poem (of the twelfth century), *Haft Paykar* (The Seven Beauties), in which the Sassanid prince Bahram Gor visits seven palaces, each of which respectively is entirely the color of one of the seven planets; in each of the seven palaces, a princess of one of the seven climates, dressed also in the corresponding color, tells the prince a long story containing many indications. The poem illustrates the adage *Vita coelitus comparanda*, and provides one of the motifs most frequently used in Persian miniatures.

143. *Ibid.*, 915-917. (N. 86 above refers to an important study by an Iranian shaykh of the last century on the symbolism (*ta'wīl*) of the color red.)

144. *Ibid.*,§819, ending as follows: "The mathematicians learned the value and the use of the triangle; the triangle is held in great veneration by the mystics; many things can be schematized in the triangle, and in such a way that by duplication and intersection we get the ancient and mysterious hexagon."

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